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JACOB ABBOTT'S

YOUNG CHRISTIAN SERIES.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

- I. THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN.
- II. THE CORNER STONE.
- III. THE WAY TO DO GOOD.
- IV. HOARYHEAD AND M'DONNER.

VERY GREATLY IMPROVED AND ENLARGED.

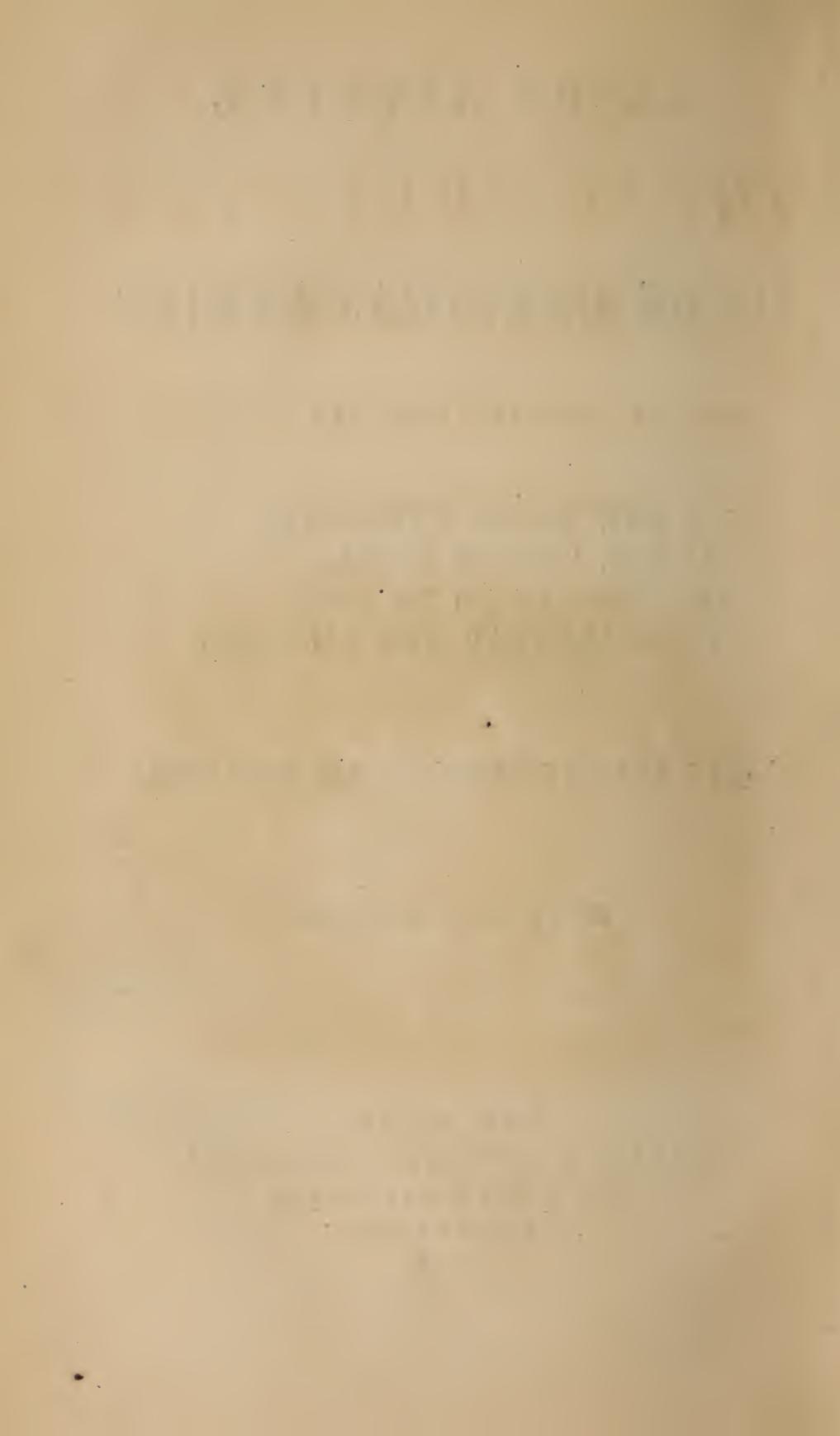
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NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
329 & 331 PEARL STREET,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.

1877.

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THE
YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

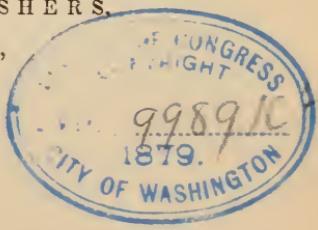
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P R E F A C E.

THE works comprised in the Young Christian series are the following :

I. THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN ; or, a Familiar Illustration of the Principles of Christian Duty.

II. THE CORNER STONE ; or, a Familiar Illustration of the Principles of Christian Truth.

III. THE WAY TO DO GOOD ; or, the Christian Character Mature.

IV. HOARYHEAD and M'DONNER ; or the Radical Nature of the Change in Spiritual Regeneration.

THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN, the first volume of the series, is intended as a guide to the young inquirer in first entering upon his Christian course. Like the other volumes of the series, the work is intended, not for children, nor exclusively for the young, but for all who are first commencing a religious life, whatever their years may be. Since, however, it proves, in fact, that such beginners are seldom found among those who have passed beyond the early periods of life, the author has kept in mind the wants and the mental characteristics

of youth, rather than those of maturity, in the form in which he has presented the truths brought to view, and in the narratives and dialogues with which he has attempted to illustrate them.

In respect to the theology of the work, it takes every where for granted that salvation for the human soul is to be obtained through repentance for past sin, and through faith and trust in the merits and atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Its main design, however, is to enforce the practice, and not to discuss the theory, of religion. Its object is simply to explain and illustrate Christian *duty*, exhibiting this duty, however, as based on those great fundamental principles of faith in which all evangelical Christians concur.

THE CORNER STONE, the second volume of the series, though intended to explain and illustrate certain great religious truths, is not a work of technical theology. Its aim is simply to present, in a plain and very practical manner, a view of some of the great fundamental truths of revealed religion, on which the superstructure of Christian character necessarily reposes. The character and history of Jesus Christ, considered as the chief Corner Stone of the Christian faith, form the main subjects of the volume; and the principles of faith which are brought to view are presented to the reader, as they are seen in the Scriptures, centring in him.

THE WAY TO do Good, the third volume of the series, is designed to present a practical view of a life of Christian usefulness, and to exhibit in a very plain and simple manner the way in which a sincere and honest follower of Jesus is to honor his sacred profession and advance his Master's cause, by his daily efforts to promote the welfare and happiness of those around him.

HOARYHEAD and M'DONNER, the fourth and last volume of the series, consists of two connected tales, designed to illustrate the very radical character of the change by which the Christian life is begun.

In the treatment of the various topics discussed in these volumes, the author has made it his aim to divest the subject of religion of its scholastic garb, and to present in all plainness and simplicity, and in a manner adapted to the intellectual wants of common readers, the great fundamental principles of truth and duty. It is now many years since the volumes of this series were first issued, and during that time they have been published, in whole or in part, very extensively throughout the Christian world. Besides the wide circulation which the series has enjoyed in this country, numerous editions, more or less complete, have been issued in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Holland, India, and at various missionary stations throughout

the globe. The extended approbation which the Christian community have thus bestowed upon the plan, and the increasing demand for copies of the several volumes, have led to the republication of the series at this time in a new and much improved form. The works have all been carefully revised by the author for this edition, and they are embellished with numerous illustrative engravings, which it is hoped may aid in making them attractive for every class of readers.

New York, February, 1855.

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THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

CHAPTER I.

CONFESSiON.

“Confess your faults one to another.”

Introduction.

Nature of Confession.

Case supposed.

I WISH, in this first chapter, to point out to the reader something in the nature and effects of *confession* which every one has perhaps, at some time, experienced, but which few sufficiently consider—I mean its power to bring peace and happiness back to the heart, when the conscience has been wounded by sin. But to make myself clearly understood, I must suppose a case.

Story of the boys' disobedience on the ice.

Two boys, on a pleasant winter evening, ask their father to permit them to go out upon the river to skate. The father hesitates, because, though within certain limits he knows that there is no danger, yet he is aware that above a certain turn of the stream the current is rapid and the ice consequently thin. At last, however, he says, "You may go, but you must on no account go above the bend."

The boys accept the condition, and are soon among their twenty companions, shooting swiftly over the smooth black ice, sometimes gliding in graceful curves before the bright fire, which they have built in the middle of the stream, and sometimes sailing away into the dim distance, in search of new and unexplored regions.

Presently a plan is formed by the other boys for going in a cheerful company far up the stream to explore its shores, and then return again in half an hour to their fire. Our two boys sigh to think of their father's prohibition to them. They faintly and hesitatingly hint that the ice may not be strong enough, but their caution has no effect upon their comrades,—and the whole party set forth, and soon are flying with full speed toward the limit prescribed. Our boys think they may safely accompany the others till they reach the boundary which they are forbidden to pass;—but while they do so, they become animated and intoxicated with the motion and the scene. They feel a little foreboding as they approach the line, but as it is not definitely marked, they do not abruptly stop. They fall a little in the rear, and see whirling through the bend of the river the whole crowd of their companions—and, after a moment's hesitation, they follow on. The spot once past, their indecision vanishes;—they press forward to the foremost rank,—forget their father,—their promise,—their danger. God protects them however. They spend the half-hour in delight,—return down the river to their fire,—and at the close of the evening they

Consequences.

Their unhappiness.

take off their skates, step upon the firm ground, and walk toward their home.

The enjoyment is now over, and the *punishment* is to come. What punishment? I do not mean that their father will punish them. He knows nothing of their sin. He trusts his boys, and, confiding in their promise, he will not ask them whether they have kept it. They have returned safely, and the forbidden ice over which they have passed never can speak to tell of their disobedience. Nor do I mean the punishment which God will inflict in another world upon undutiful children. I mean another quicker punishment, and which almost always comes after transgression. And I wish my young readers would think of this more than they do

I mean *the loss of peace of mind*.

As the boys approach their father's dwelling, unless their consciences have become seared by oft repeated transgressions, their hearts are filled with uneasiness and foreboding care. They walk slowly and *silently*. As they enter the house they shrink from their father's eye. He looks pleased and happy at their safe return. But they turn away from him as soon as they can, and prefer going to another room, or in some other way avoiding his presence. Their sister perhaps, in the gayety and kindness of her heart, begins to talk with them about their evening's enjoyment: but they wish to turn the conversation. In a word, their *peace of mind is gone*,—and they shrink from every eye, and wish to go as soon as possible to bed, that they may be unseen and forgotten.

If they have been taught to fear God, they are not happy here. They dare not—strange infatuation,—repeat *their evening prayer*;—as if they supposed they could escape God's notice by neglecting to call upon him. At last, however, they sink to sleep.

The next morning they awake with the customary cheer-

Guilt a burden.

Means of relief.

fulness of childhood—until, as they look forth from their window, they see the clear ice-bound stream, which tempted them to sin, winding its way among the trees. They say nothing, but each feels guilty and sad. They meet their father and mother with clouded hearts, and every object at all connected with their transgression, awakens the remorse which destroys their happiness. They carry thus about with them a weary and a heavy burden.

I suppose that in such cases as this, most boys would continue to bear this burden, until at last they should become insensible to it, that is, until conscience is seared. But though by habit in sin the stings of remorse may be blunted, yet real peace never returns. By repeating transgression a great many times, we all come at last to feel a *general* and *settled uneasiness of heart*, which is a constant burden. Ask such an individual if he is unhappy. He tells you that he is not. He means, however, that he is not particularly unhappy *just at that time*. His burden is so *uniform* and *constant* that he comes to consider it at last as a necessary part of his existence. He has lost all recollection of what pure peace and happiness is. A man who has lived long by a water-fall, at last becomes so habituated to the noise, that silence seems a strange luxury to him. So multitudes, who have had an unquiet conscience for many years, without a single interval of repose, when they at last come and confess their sins, and find peace and happiness, are surprised and delighted with the *new and strange sensation*.

This peace can not come by habit in sin. A seared conscience is not a relieved one. But what is the way by which peace of mind is to be restored in such a case as the above? It is a very simple way. Happy would it be for mankind if it were more generally understood and practiced.

Suppose one of these boys should say to himself, some day as he is walking alone, "I am not happy, and I have not

The boy's confession.His conversation with his father.

been happy since I disobeyed my father on the ice. I was very foolish to do that, for I have suffered more in consequence of it than ten times as much pleasure would be worth. I am resolved to go and confess the whole to my father, and ask him to forgive me, and then I shall be happy again."

Having resolved upon this, he seeks the very first opportunity to relieve his mind. He is walking, we will imagine, by the side of his father, and for several minutes he hesitates—not knowing how to begin. He makes the effort however at last, and says in a sorrowful tone,

"Father, I have done something very wrong."

"What is it, my son?"

He hesitates and trembles,—and after a moment's pause, says, "I am very sorry that I did it."

"My son," says the father, "I have observed, for a day or two, that you have not been happy, and you are evidently unhappy now. I know that you must have done something wrong. But you may do just as you please about telling me what it is. If you freely confess it, and submit to the punishment, whatever it may be, you will be happy again; if not, you will continue to suffer. Now you may do just as you please."

"Well, father, I will tell you all. Do you remember that you gave us leave to go upon the river and skate the other evening?"

"Yes."

"Well, I disobeyed you, and went upon the ice, where you forbade us to go. I have been unhappy ever since, and I resolved to-day that I would come and tell you, and ask you to forgive me."

I need not detail the conversation that would follow. But there is not a child among the hundreds and perhaps thousands who will read this chapter, who does not fully under-

Confession of little faults.

Happiness.

The torn letter.

stand, that by such a confession the boy will relieve himself of his burden, restore peace to his mind, and go away from his father with a light and happy heart. He will no more dread to meet him, and to hear the sound of his voice. He can now be happy with his sister again, and look upon the beautiful stream winding in the valley, without feeling his heart sink within him under a sense of guilt,—while all the time, perhaps, his brother, who would not come and acknowledge his sin, has his heart still darkened, and his countenance made sad by the gloomy recollection of unforgiven sin. Yes, *confession of sin* has an almost magic power in *restoring peace of mind*.

Providence seems to have implanted this principle in the human heart, for the express purpose of having us act upon it. He has so formed us, that when we have done wrong, we can not feel at peace again until we have acknowledged our wrong to the person against whom it was done. And this acknowledgment of it removes the uneasiness as effectually as fire removes cold, or as water extinguishes fire. It operates in all cases, small as well as great, and is infallible in its power. And yet how slowly do young persons and even old persons learn to use it. The remedies for almost every external evil are soon discovered, and are at once applied; but the remedy for that uneasiness of mind which results from having neglected some duty or committed some sin, and which consists in simple confession of it to the person injured,—how slowly is it learned, and how reluctantly practiced.

I once knew a boy who was intrusted with a letter to be carried to a distant place. On his way, or just after his arrival, in attempting to take the letter out of his pocket suddenly, he tore it completely in two. He was in consternation. What to do he did not know. He did not dare to carry the letter in its mangled condition, and deliver it to

The torn letter.

Peace of mind.

The anonymous letter.

the person to whom it was addressed, and he did not dare to destroy it. He did accordingly the most foolish thing he could do ;—he kept it for many days, doubting and waiting, and feeling anxious and unhappy whenever it came in his sight. At last he perceived that this was folly ; so he took the letter, carried it to the person to whom it was addressed, saying,

“ Here is a letter which I was intrusted with for you, and in taking it out of my pocket, I very carelessly tore it in two. I am sorry for it, but I have no excuse.”

The receiver of the letter said it was of no consequence, and the boy went home suddenly and entirely relieved.

My reader will say, “ Why, this was a very simple way of getting over the difficulty. Why did he not think of it before ?”

It was indeed a simple way. The whole story is so simple, that it is hardly dignified enough to be introduced ; but it is *true*, and it exactly illustrates the idea that I am endeavoring to enforce, namely, that in *little* things, as well as in *great* things, the *confession of sin restores peace of mind*.

I will now mention one other case which illustrates the same general truth, but which is in one respect very different from all the preceding.

A merchant was one morning sitting in his counting-room, preparing for the business of the day, when his boy entered with several letters from the Post Office. Among them was one in a strange handwriting and with the words, “ *Money inclosed*,” written upon the outside. As the merchant was not at that time expecting any money, his attention was first attracted to this letter. He opened it and read somewhat as follows :

“ ——, January 4, 1831.

“ SIR,—Some time ago I defrauded you of a certain sum of money. You did not know it then, and I suppose you

The anonymous letter.

Reparation compared with confession.

never would have known it, unless I had informed you. But I have had no peace of mind since it was done, and send you back the money in this letter. Hoping that God will forgive this and all my other sins,

I am, yours,

“ _____.”

I remarked that this case was totally different from all the others in one respect. Reader, do you notice the difference? It consists in this, viz. that here not only was the sin confessed, but *reparation was made*. The man not only acknowledged the fraud, but he *paid back the money*. And if any of my readers are but little acquainted with human nature, they may perhaps imagine that it was the *reparation*, and not the *confession*, which restored peace of mind. But I think I can show very clearly, that making reparation is not effectual. Suppose that this man, instead of writing the above letter, had just come into the store of the merchant, and asked to buy some article or other, and in paying for it, had managed dexterously to put into the hands of the clerk a larger sum than was due, so as to repay, without the merchant's knowledge, the whole amount of which he had defrauded him. Do you think that this would have restored his peace of mind? No, not even if he had thus secretly paid back double what he had unjustly taken. It was the *confession*; the *acknowledgment of having done wrong*, which really quieted his troubled conscience, and gave him peace.

It is not probable that this confession was sufficient to make him perfectly happy again,—because it was incomplete. The *reparation* was perfect, but the *acknowledgment* was not. The reader will observe that the letter has no name signed to it, and the merchant could not by any means discover who was the writer of it. Now if the man had honestly told the whole—if he had written his name and place of residence, and described fully all the circumstances of the

Confession of great crimes.

Effects of confession.

Punishment.

original fraud, he would have been much more fully relieved. All confession which is intended to bring back peace of mind when it is gone, should be *open* and *thorough*. There are, indeed, many cases where, from peculiar circumstances, it is not the duty of an individual who has done wrong to make a full confession of it to any of his fellow-men. This, however, does not affect the general principle, that the more full and free the confession is when one is made, the more perfect will be the restoration of peace.

So strongly is this principle fixed by the Creator in the human heart, that men who have committed crimes to which the laws of the land annex the most severe public punishments, after enduring for some time in secrecy the remorse which crime almost always brings, have at last openly come forward, and surrendered themselves to the magistrate, and acknowledged their guilt,—and have felt their hearts relieved and lightened by receiving an ignominious public punishment, in exchange for the inward tortures of remorse. Even a murderer has been known to come forward to relieve the horrors of his soul by confession,—though he knew that this confession would chain him in a dark stone cell, and after a short, but gloomy interval, bring him to an ignominious and violent end.

My reader, you can test the power of confession, and enjoy the relief and happiness which it will bring, without paying so fearful a price as this;—but these cases lead me to remark upon one other subject connected with confession—I mean *punishment*. Sometimes, as I before remarked, when a person confesses a wrong, he brings himself under the necessity of *repairing* the injury done, and at other times of submitting to *punishment*. Parents often forgive their children when they have done wrong, if they will only confess it; and though this ought sometimes to be done, there is yet great danger that children, in such cases, will soon acquire

Story of the boys on the ice continued.

a habit of doing wrong, and then coming to confess it with a careless air, as if it was not of much consequence, or rather as if confessing the sin destroyed it, and left them perfectly innocent.

I should think, on this account, that the father whose sons had disobeyed him on the ice, would be much at a loss to know what to do, after one of his boys had so frankly acknowledged it. I can suppose him saying to his son, "Well, my son, I am glad you have told me freely all about this. You did very wrong, and I am very much at a loss to know what I ought to do. I will consider it, and speak to you by and by about it. In the mean time you may be assured that I forgive you from my heart, and if I should conclude to do any thing farther, it will not be because I am now displeased, but because I wish to save you effectually from the sad consequence of doing wrong in future."

When the father is left to muse by himself upon the subject, we may imagine him to be thinking as follows.

"I should not have thought that my boys would have broken their promise and disobeyed me. I wonder if my eldest disobeyed also. The youngest only spoke of himself—shall I ask him?—No. Each shall stand on independent ground. If the other sinned too, he too may come voluntarily and obtain peace by confession, or he must continue to bear the tortures of self-reproach. And now if I take no further notice of the transgression which is already acknowledged, I am afraid that my son will the next time yield more easily to temptation, thinking that he has only to acknowledge it, in order to be forgiven. Shall I forbid their skating any more this winter?—or for a month?—or shall I require them, every time they return, to give an exact account where they have been?—I wish I could forgive and forget the offense entirely, but I am afraid I ought not to do so."

To parents and teachers.

Confession a privilege.

Thus he would be perplexed ; and if he were a wise parent, and under the influence of *moral principle*, and not of mere *parental feeling*, he would probably do something more than merely pass it by. The boy would find that confession to such a father is not merely nominal,—that it brings with it inconvenience, or deprivation of enjoyment, or perhaps positive punishment. Still he would rejoice in the opportunity to acknowledge his sins ; for the loss of a little pleasure, or the suffering of punishment, he would feel to be a very small price to pay for returning peace of mind, and he would fly to confession, as a refuge from self-reproach, whenever he had done wrong.

Let the parents or the teachers who may read this, take this view of the nature of confession, and practice upon it in their intercourse with their children and their pupils. Always meet them kindly when they come forward to acknowledge their faults. Sympathize with them in the struggle, which you know they must make at such a time, and consider how strong the temptation was which led them to sin. And in every thing of the nature of punishment which you inflict, be sure that the *prevention of future guilt* is your *sole* motive, and not the gratification of your own present feeling of displeasure. If this is done, those under your care will soon *value* confession as a *privilege*, and will often seek in it a refuge from inward suffering.

Yes, an opportunity to acknowledge wrong of any kind, is a great *privilege*, and if any of my readers are satisfied that what I have been advancing on this subject is true, I hope they will prove by experiment the correctness of these principles. Almost every person has at all times some little sources of uneasiness upon his mind. They are not very well defined in their nature and cause, but still they exist, and they very much disturb the happiness. Now if you look within long enough to seize hold of and examine these

Depression of spirits.

feelings of secret uneasiness, you will find that, in almost every case, they are connected with *something wrong which you have done*. That anxious brow of yours then is clouded with remorse ;—we call it by soft names,—*care, solicitude, perplexity*,—but it is generally a slight remorse,—so weak as not to force its true character upon your notice, but yet strong enough to destroy peace of mind. A great deal of what is called depression of spirits arises from this source. There are duties which you do not faithfully discharge : or inclinations which you habitually indulge when you know they ought to be denied. Conscience keeps up, therefore, a continual murmur, but she murmurs so gently that you do not recognize her voice—and yet it destroys your rest. You feel restless and unhappy, and wonder what can be the cause.

Let no one understand me to maintain that *all* the depression of spirits which exists in human hearts arises from a secret sense of guilt. I know that there is real solicitude about the future, unconnected with remorse for the past ;—and there is often a sinking of the spirits that results from bodily disease, which moral remedies will not reach. These cases are, however, comparatively few. A far greater proportion of the restlessness and of the corroding cares which reign in human hearts is produced, or at least is very much aggravated, by being connected with guilt.

I suppose some of my readers are perusing these pages only for amusement. They will be interested, perhaps, in the illustrations, and if of mature and cultivated minds, in the point to which I am endeavoring to make them tend. I hope, however, that there are some who are reading really and honestly for the sake of moral improvement. To those I would say: Do you never feel unquiet in spirit, restless or sad ? Do you never experience a secret uneasiness of heart, of which you do not know the exact cause,

Remedy for depression of spirits.

Careless confession.

Anecdote.

but which destroys, or at least disturbs your peace? If you do, take this course. Instead of flying from those feelings when they come into your heart, *advance boldly to meet them*. Grasp and examine them. Ascertain their cause. You will find, in nine cases out of ten, that their cause is *something wrong* in your own conduct or character. Young persons will generally find something wrong toward their parents. Now, go and confess these faults. Do not endeavor to palliate or excuse them, but endeavor on the other hand to see their worst side, and if you confess them freely and fully, and resolve to sin no more, peace will return, at least, so far as these causes have banished it from your heart.

After I had written thus far, I read these pages to a gentleman who visited me, and he remarked that before I closed the chapter, I ought to caution my youthful readers against acquiring the habit of doing wrong and then coming carelessly to confess it, without any real sorrow, as though the acknowledgment atoned for the sin and wiped all the guilt away.

Such confession is a mere form, and instead of exerting any salutary influence on the mind, it acts only as a lure to future sin. It is confession without penitence; and confession without penitence is mere pretence and hypocrisy.

‘I was once,’ said he, ‘visiting in a family, and while we were sitting at the fire, a little boy came in and did some wanton, willful mischief.

“Why, my child,” said the mother, “see what you have done. That was very wrong;—but you are sorry for it, I suppose. Are you not?”

“Yes, Ma,” said the boy carelessly, running away at the same time to play.

“Yes,” said the mother, “he is sorry. He does wrong

Heartless confession.

An experiment.

sometimes, but then he is always sorry for it, and acknowledges it. You are sorry now, are you not, my son?"

"Yes, Ma," said the boy, as he ran capering about the room, striking the furniture and his little sister with his whip.



"YES, MA."

My friend thought that there was some danger that this sort of confession might be made. And it is undoubtedly often made. But it does no good. Confession must come from the heart, or it will not relieve or improve the heart.

This anecdote shows the necessity of *some punishment* in all governments. If a fa-

ther forgives the disobedience of his children simply upon their confessing it, his children will often disobey, expecting to make peace by confession as a matter of course; and the confession will thus become a mere useless form.

A teacher once made a rule, that if any irregularity occurred in any of the classes, the assistant who heard the classes was to send the person in fault to him. At first the pupils felt this very much. One and another would come with tears in their eyes to acknowledge some fault, although it was perhaps only a very slight one. The teacher inflicted no punishment, but asked them to be careful in future, and sent them away kindly. Soon, however, they began to feel less penitent when they had done wrong. They came more

and more as a matter of form, until at last they would come and state their fault as carelessly as if they were merely giving their teacher a piece of indifferent information. No ; —confession must never be understood as making any atonement for sin. Whenever you acknowledge that you have done wrong, do it with sincere penitence,—and with a spirit which would lead you to make all the reparation in your power, if it is a case which admits of reparation,—to submit to the just punishment, if any is inflicted,—and always to resolve most firmly that you will sin no more.

Let all my readers, then, whether old or young, look at once around them, and seek diligently for every thing wrong which they have done toward their fellows, and try the experiment of acknowledging the wrong in every case, that they may see how much effect such a course will have, in bringing peace and happiness to their hearts again. When, however, I say that *every thing* wrong ought to be acknowledged, I do not mean that it is, in every case, necessary to make a *formal confession in language*. Acknowledgments may be made by *actions*, as distinctly and as cordially as by *words*. An example will best illustrate this.

A journeyman in a carpenter's shop borrowed a plane of his comrade, and in giving it back to him it was accidentally dropped and dulled. The lender maintained that the borrower ought to sharpen it, while the borrower said that it was not his fault that the plane fell, and thus an angry controversy arose between them. It would have taken but a few minutes to have sharpened the instrument, but after having once contended about it, each of the disputants was determined not to yield. The plane was laid down in its damaged state, each declaring that he would not sharpen it.

The borrower, however, did not feel at ease, and as he lay down that night to rest, the thought of his foolish contention

Story continued.

Confession to God.

made him unhappy. He reflected, too, that since his friend had been willing to lend him his instrument, he ought to have borne, himself, all the risk of its return. He regretted that he had refused to do what now, on cool reflection, he saw was only his duty.

On the following morning, therefore, he went half an hour earlier than usual to the shop, and while alone there, with the help of grindstone and hone, he put the unfortunate plane in the best possible order,—laid it in its proper place—and when his companion came in, he said to him pleasantly,

“I wish you would try your plane, and see how it cuts this morning.”

Now, was not this a most full and complete acknowledgment of having been in the wrong? And yet there is not a syllable of confession *in language*. Cases will often thus occur, in which a confession may thus be made by something *done*. Any way by which you can openly manifest your conviction that you have done wrong, and your determination to do so no more, is sufficient. The mode best for the purpose will vary with circumstances. Sometimes it will be by words, sometimes by writing, and sometimes by action. The only thing that is essential is, that the heart should feel what in these various ways it attempts to express.

I doubt not now, but that many of my readers, who have taken up this book with a desire to find *religious instruction* in it, have been for some time wishing to have me come to the subject of the *confession of sin to God*. You feel that the greatest of all your transgressions have been committed against him; and that you can have no true peace of mind until he has forgiven you. I have no doubt that this is the state of mind of very many of those who will read this chapter. But confession of sin is the same in its nature and tendency when made to God as when made to your fellow-man. When you have finished this chapter then, shut the

| Confession to God. | Anxiety unnecessary. | Common mistakes. |
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book, and go alone before your Maker, and acknowledge all your sins. Acknowledge them frankly and fully, and endeavor to see and feel the worst, not by merely calling your offences by harsh names, but by calmly looking at the aggravating circumstances. While you do this, do not spend your strength in trying to *feel strong emotion*. You can not feel emotion by merely trying to feel it. There is no necessity of prolonged terror,—no need of agony of body or of mind,—no need of gloom of countenance. Just go and *sincerely acknowledge your sins to God*, and ask him to forgive you through Jesus Christ, and he will.

But perhaps some of you will say, “I am surprised to see the sentiment advanced, that there is no need of strong agitation of mind before we can be forgiven for sin. I am sure that there is often very strong feeling of this kind. There is terror and agony of mind, and afterward the individual becomes a sincere Christian.”

It is true, there is sometimes strong and continued agitation in the mind of the sinner that repents, but it is only because those who suffer it are unwilling to *yield to God*, and confess their sins to him. As soon as this unwillingness is gone, and they come to their God and Savior with all their hearts, the mental suffering vanishes. I said that if you were *willing now* to confess your sins to God with sincere penitence, you may at once be happy. Of course, if you are unwilling,—if you see that you are sinning against him, and will not come and make peace, you then have indeed cause to tremble.

There is a great mistake prevalent on this subject, especially among the young, though the subject is often clearly enough explained, both from the press and the pulpit. God’s command is, *repent at once*, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have peace. I have, in this chapter used the word confess, instead of repent, for sincere

Common mistakes.

Immediate repentance.

confession is only a manifestation of penitence. Now I do not find that the Bible requires any thing *previous* to repentance. It does not say that we must be miserable first, either for a week or a day or an hour. I never heard any minister urge upon his hearers, the duty of suffering anguish of mind, and all the horrors of remorse, a single moment, in order to prepare the soul for Christ. It is doubtless true, that persons do often thus suffer, and are perhaps led by it in the end to fly to the refuge. *But they ought to have fled to the refuge without this suffering, in the beginning.* The truth is, that God commands "men everywhere to repent." It is a notorious fact, that they will not comply. When the duty of humbly confessing their sins to God is clearly brought before them, there is often so great a desire to continue in sin, that a very painful struggle continues for some time. Now this struggle is all our own fault,—it is something that *we add*, altogether;—God does not require it. His command is, Come to me *at once*. Ministers in the pulpit do not urge this continued struggle, while sin is cherished in the heart; so far from desiring it are they, that they urge their hearers to come at once to the Savior and be happy;—and when any of their hearers are suffering in consequence of their indecision, the pastor, so far from wishing them to continue in this state as a part of their duty, urges them with all his power to terminate it at once, by giving up their hearts to God and to happiness. And yet so reluctant are men to give up their hearts to God, and so exceedingly common is this guilty struggle, that by the young it is often considered as a *painful part of duty*. They think they can not become Christians without it. Some strive to awaken it and continue it, and are sad because they can not succeed. Others, who are serving their Maker, and endeavoring to grow in grace and to prepare for heaven, feel but little confidence in his sympathy or affection for

Salvation by Christ.

them, because just before they concluded to yield to God, sin did not make such violent and desperate efforts in their hearts, as in some others, to retain its hold.

No, my reader, there is no necessity of any prolonged struggle, or suffering. If this chapter has led you to be *willing to confess your sins*, you may confess them now, and from this moment be calm, and peaceful, and happy.

My readers will recollect that I mentioned in the early part of this chapter two points connected with confession, namely, *reparation* and *punishment*. In confessing sins to God, we have no reparation to him to make, and no punishment to suffer. We have a Savior, and we fly to him. He makes reparation, and he has already suffered for us. We must come trusting to him. I hope very many of my readers will see that both duty and happiness urge them to take the simple course I have endeavored to describe and illustrate, and that they will now take it, and follow me through the remaining chapters of this book with hearts bent on loving and serving God.

CHAPTER II.

THE FRIEND.

“To whom shall we go?”

THERE is a very excellent infant school in one of the chief towns of Switzerland, where many young children are collected, and placed under the care of a most kind and faithful superintendent and assistant, to receive moral and intellectual instruction. Whenever a new pupil is admitted, she looks with fear and trembling upon the strange scene before her. A large open room is filled with the children, who are seen standing in rows or collected in busy groups—while in the pleasant play-ground, verdant with grass and trees, many others are seen full of activity and happiness.

It is the custom whenever a new scholar enters the school, for the teacher to collect all the children in the great room, extending them in a line around it; then he walks into the midst of them, leading the little stranger by the hand, and something like the following conversation ensues.

Teacher. “Here is a little girl who has come to join our school. She is a stranger, and is afraid. Will you all promise to treat her kindly?”

Pupils. (All answering together.) “Yes, sir, we will.”

Teacher. “She has told me that she will try to be a good girl and to do her duty; but sometimes she will forget, I am afraid, and sometimes she will yield to temptation and do wrong. Now which of the older children will be her little

The protector appointed.Power and sympathy.

friend, to be with her for a few days till she becomes acquainted with the school, and tell her what she ought to do, and help her to watch herself, that she may avoid doing wrong?"

Several voices at once. "I will, I will, sir."

The teacher then selects from those who thus volunteer, one of the best and oldest children, and constitutes her the friend and protector of the stranger. The protector and her charge become thenceforth constant companions. They are together wherever they go. A strong mutual attachment springs up between them. If the stranger is injured in any way, the protector feels aggrieved: kindness shown to one touches almost as effectually the other, and thus the trembling stranger is guided and encouraged, and led on to duty and to strength by the influence of her protector, though that protector is *only another child*.

We all need a protector, especially in our moral interests. The human heart seems to be formed to lean upon something stronger than itself for support. We are so surrounded with difficulties and temptations and dangers here, that we need a refuge in which we can trust. Children find such a protector and such a refuge in their parents. How much safer you feel in sickness if your father or your mother is by your bedside. How often, in a summer evening, when a dark heavy cloud is thundering in the sky, and the window glitters with the brightness of the lightning, do the children of a family sigh for their father's return, and feel relieved and almost safe when he comes among them. But when man is mature he can find no earthly protector. He must go alone unless he has a friend above.

A protector and friend ought to possess two distinct qualifications, which it is very difficult to find united. He ought to be *our superior both in knowledge and power*, so that we can confide in his protection; and yet he ought to be *in the*

A sure protector.

same circumstances with ourselves, that he may understand and appreciate our trials and difficulties.

Now my object in this chapter is to endeavor to show my readers that they need, and that they can have, just such a protector and friend as is above described,—one that has power to save to the uttermost, and yet one that knows by his own experience all their trials and cares. It is certain that if any of you go now and confess your sins to God, and begin a life of piety, that you will, without aid from above, wander away into sin, forget your resolutions, displease God more than ever, and more than ever destroy your own peace of mind. I wish, therefore, to persuade all those who desire henceforth to do their duty, to come now and unite themselves in indissoluble bonds with the moral protector and friend, whose character I am about to describe.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, 2d chapter and 16th verse, there occurs the following remarkable passage:—“For verily he,” that is, Christ, “took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God.” Here you see how the two qualifications named above were united in our Savior. He might have come from heaven and died upon the cross to make atonement for our sins, without suffering, as he did, so long a pilgrimage below, as a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” But he came and lived here thirty years, tasting of every bitter cup which we have to drink, in order that he might know by experience all our trials and troubles, and be able more effectually to sympathize with us and help us. He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him *the seed of Abraham*, that is, the *nature of man*.

I wish my readers would pause and reflect a moment upon these two elements in the character of a valuable protector,

Story of the sailor boy.

The captain's want of sympathy.

—namely, *power* and *sympathy*, and consider how seldom they are united. I will give one or two examples which may help to illustrate the subject.

A mother with a large family, and with but slender means to provide for their wants, concluded to send her eldest son to sea. She knew that though the toils and labors of a seafaring life were extreme, they *could be borne*, and that they brought with them many pleasures and many useful results. She agreed, therefore, with a sea captain, a distant relative of hers, to admit her boy on board his ship. The captain became really interested in his new friend—said that he would take good care of him, teach him his duty on ship-board, and help him on in the world, if he was diligent and faithful.

The boy looked with some dread upon the prospect of bidding farewell to his mother, to his brothers and sisters, and his quiet home, to explore unknown and untried scenes, and to encounter the dangers of a stormy ocean. He however bade all farewell, and was soon tossing upon the waters, feeling safe under his new protector. He soon found, however, that the captain, as a protecting friend, had *power*, but that he had not *sympathy*. He would sometimes, in a stormy night, when the masts were reeling to and fro, and the bleak wind was whistling through the frozen rigging, compel him to go aloft, though the poor boy, unaccustomed to the giddy height, was in an agony of terror, and in real danger of falling headlong to the deck. The captain had forgotten what were his own feelings when he was himself a boy, or he would probably have taught this necessary part of seamanship in a more gentle and gradual manner. He thought that the boy ought to learn to go aloft, and his want of *sympathy* with the feelings of one so young, led him to a course which was severe, and in fact cruel, though not intentionally so.

The little ship.

The captain a real friend.

The captain never spoke to his young charge, excepting to command him. He took no interest in his boyish thoughts and feelings. Once the boy spent all his leisure time industriously in rigging out a little ship complete. "This," thought he, "will please the captain. He wants me to learn, and this will show him that I have been learning." As he went on, however, from day to day, the captain took no notice of his work. A word or a look of satisfaction from his protector would have gratified him exceedingly. But no;—the stern, weather-beaten officer could not sympathize with a child or appreciate his feelings at all; and one day when the boy had been sent away from his work on some brief errand, the captain came upon deck, and after looking around a moment, he said to a rough-looking man standing there, "I say, Jack, I wish you would clear away a little here: coil those lines—and that boy's bauble there,—you may as well throw it overboard; he never will make any thing of it."

Commands on board ship must be obeyed; and the poor cabin-boy came up from below just in time to catch the captain's words, and to see his little ship fly from the sailor's hands into the waves. It fell upon its side—its sails were drenched with the water, and it fast receded from view. The boy went to his hammock and wept bitterly. His heart was wounded deeply; but the stern captain did not know it. How could he sympathize with the feelings of a child?

And yet this captain was the real friend of the boy. He protected him in all *great* dangers, and took good care of him when in foreign ports, that he should not be exposed to sickness or to temptation. When they returned home he recommended him to another ship, where, through the captain's influence, he had a better situation and higher wages,—and he assisted him in various ways for many years. This boy had thus a protector who possessed *power*, but not *sympathy*.

This boy however might have had a friend who would have sympathized with him fully, but who would have had no *power*. I might illustrate this case also, by supposing in the next ship which he should enter, that the captain should feel no interest in him at all, but that he should have with him there a brother, or another boy of his own age, who would be his constant companion and friend,—entering into all his feelings, sympathizing with him in his enjoyments and in his troubles,—but yet having no *power* to protect him from real evils, or to avert any dangers which might threaten. I might suppose such a case, and following the boy in imagination into the new scene, I might show that *sympathy* alone is not sufficient. But it is not necessary to do this. All my readers, doubtless, already fully understand the distinction between these two, and the necessity that they should be united in such a protector as we all need.

The great Friend of sinners unites these two essential qualifications. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him, and he can fully sympathize with us in all our trials and cares ; for he has been upon the earth,—suffering all that we have to suffer, and drinking of every cup which is presented to our lips. He became flesh, that is, he became a man, and dwelt among us ; so that, as the Bible most forcibly and beautifully expresses it, “we have not an high-priest which can not be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

It must be borne in mind that our Savior did not commence his public ministrations till he was thirty years of age. *Thirty years* he spent—in what? Why, in learning, by slow and painful experience, *what it is to be a human being* in this world of trial. Have I a reader who is only ten or twelve years of age? Remember, the Savior was

Story of Howard, the philanthropist.

once as young as you,—exposed to such little difficulties and trials as you are. He has gone through the whole, from infancy upward, and he does not forget. You may be sure, then, that he is ready to sympathize with you. If any thing is great enough to interest you, you may be sure it is great enough to interest him in your behalf. He remembers his own childhood, and will sympathize with the feelings of yours.

This plan of coming into our world and becoming one of us, and remaining in obscurity so long, that he might learn by experiment what the human condition is, in all its details, was certainly a very extraordinary one. It is spoken of as very extraordinary everywhere in the Bible.

You have all heard of Howard, the philanthropist. When he was thirty or forty years of age, there were, everywhere in Europe, jails and dungeons filled with wretched prisoners, some of whom were guilty and some innocent. They were crowded together in small, cold, damp rooms. Their food was scanty and bad,—dreadful diseases broke out among them; and when this was the case, they were, in a vast multitude of cases, left to suffer and to die in unmitigated agony. Very few knew their condition, and there were none to pity or relieve them, until Howard undertook the task. He left his home in England and went forth, encountering every difficulty and every discouragement, until he had explored thoroughly this mass of misery and brought it to public view, and had done every thing he could to mitigate its severity.

This was extraordinary enough, and it attracted universal attention. All Europe was surprised that a man should devote years of his life to a most arduous and hazardous labor, thus exposing himself to the most loathsome influences and to the worst diseases, without any prospect of remuneration, and all for the sole purpose of relieving the sufferings

Imaginary scene.**The Savior.**

of *criminals*,—of men whom the world has cast off as unfit for human society. It was, I acknowledge, extraordinary ; —but what would have been the sensation produced, if Howard could not have gained admission to these scenes, so as effectually to accomplish his object, without becoming *himself a prisoner*, and thus sharing for a time the fate of those whom he was endeavoring to save ? Suppose he should consent to this. Imagine him approaching for this purpose some dreary prison. He passes its dismal threshold, and the bolts and bars of the gloomiest dungeon are turned upon him. He lays aside the comfortable dress of the citizen for the party-colored garb of confinement and disgrace. He holds out his arm for the manacles, and lies down at night upon his bed of straw, and lingers away months, or perhaps years of wretchedness, for no other purpose than that *he may fully know what the wretchedness of imprisonment is*. He thus looks misery in the face, and takes it by the hand, and he emerges at last from his cell, emaciated by disease, and worn out by the gloom of perpetual night,—and his heart sickened by the atmosphere of sin and shame. Suppose he had done this, how strongly could he, after it, sympathize with the sufferings of a prisoner, and how cordially and with what confidence can the inmates of those abodes come to him with their story of woe.

Now, we have such a Savior as this. He has been among us. He has himself experienced every kind of trial and suffering which we have to endure. So that if we choose him for our friend, we may come to him on every occasion, sure of finding in him not only *sympathy* to feel for us, but *power* to relieve us. No matter what may be the source of our trial, whether great or small : if it is great enough to interest *us*, it is great enough to interest *him* for us. Perhaps some young child who reads this has been pained to the heart by the unkindness of some one in whom

Human sympathy.

he had reposed all his confidence. The action which showed this neglect or unkindness was so trifling, that possibly the little sufferer feels that no one can sympathize with him in a case of sorrow apparently so small. But Jesus Christ was once as young a child as you ; he too, doubtless, had companions and friends, and if he did not experience unkindness and ingratitude at their hands, childhood was the only time of his life in which he was free from these injuries. He, doubtless, knows them full well ; and there is one thing in which the sympathy of our Savior differs from that of every other friend—he judges not from the *magnitude of the cause* of sorrow, but from the *real effect* of that cause upon the heart which suffers it. If a child is agitated by a trifling cause, he looks at the greatness of the agitation and suffering,—not at the insignificance of the cause. But it is not so with men :—they look at the outward causes alone.

In all the greater trials of life, too, I mean those which result from greater and more permanent causes, we may confidently expect sympathy and fellow-feeling if we come to the Savior. Does poverty threaten you ? He knows what poverty is better than you ; for years, he knew not where to lay his head. Do you suffer from the unkind treatment of others ? He has tried this in the extreme, and can fully sympathize with you. Do you weep over the grave of a beloved friend ? Jesus wept from this cause long before you. In fact, he went about the world, not only to *do good* but to *taste of suffering*, that he might know, with all the vividness of experience, exactly what suffering, in all its variety, is.

We all love sympathy when we are suffering,—but there is one occasion on which we feel the need of it still more—I mean in temptation. We need sympathy when we are struggling with temptation, and still more when we have done wrong, and are reaping its bitter fruits. A dreadful

The murderer's cell.

The keeper's kindness to the prisoner.

murder was once committed, which aroused the alarm and indignation of an extensive community ; every one expressed the strongest abhorrence of the deed, and made the greatest efforts to procure the arrest and punishment of the guilty man. And this was right ; though with this feeling there should have existed, in every heart, a sentiment of compassion for the sufferings which the wretched criminal was doomed to endure.

He was arrested, tried, and condemned to die ; and a few hours before the execution of the sentence, I went with a clergyman who often visited him, to see him in his cell.

When we had entered his gloomy prison, the jailer closed behind us its massive iron door, and barred and locked it. We found ourselves in a spacious passage, with a stone floor, and stone walls, and a stone roof, and with narrow iron doors on each side, leading to the cells of the various prisoners. We ascended the stairs, and found every story assuming the same rigid features of iron and stone. In a corner of the upper story was the cell of the murderer.

A little grated window opened into the passage-way. The jailer tapped softly at the window, and informed the prisoner, in a kind and gentle tone, that the clergyman had come.

“Should you like to have us come in ?” asked the jailer. The prisoner instantly assented, and the jailer unbolted and unbarred the door. “Strange !” thought I. “Here is a criminal who has outraged the laws of both God and man, and a whole community has arisen in justice, and declared that he is unworthy to live,—and to-morrow, by the hand of violence, he is to die. And yet his very keeper treats him so tenderly that he will not come into his cell without first obtaining permission !”

As we passed through the narrow aperture in the thick

The prisoner.

stone wall which the iron door had closed, the whole aspect of the room and of the prisoner was one which effectually removed my surprise that he should be treated with kindness and compassion. He was pale and haggard, and he trembled very exceedingly. He seemed exhausted by the agony of remorse and terror. A few hours before, his wife had been in the cell to bid him a final farewell, and the next day he was to be led forth to execution in the presence of thousands. In the mean time the walls, and floor, and roof of his cell—of continued, uninterrupted stone and iron—seemed to say to him wherever he looked, “*You shall not escape.*” It seemed as if the eye would have rested with a feeling of relief upon a board or a curtain, even if it concealed a stone behind,—with so forbidding and relentless a gripe did this dismal cell seem to hold its unhappy tenant. As I looked between the heavy iron bars of his grated



THE PRISONER.

The Savior's sympathy.

Common distrust of it.

window upon the distant plains and hills, and thought how ardently he must wish that he were once more innocent and free, I forgot the cold-blooded brutality of the crime, and only mourned over the misery and ruin of the man.

The world does indeed ordinarily sympathize in some degree with a great criminal like this, in the remorse and anguish which he endures; but in general men are indignant with the offender if his crime is great, and they treat him with ridicule and scorn if it is small. Jesus Christ, however, *pities* a sinner. He loved us while we were yet in our sins; he came to save us. He came, not to inflict the punishment which our *guilt* deserved, but to redeem us from the *sufferings* into which it had brought us.

This is everywhere very apparent in his whole history. Often the greatest sinners came to him, and he never reproached them, when they came with a humble and penitent heart. He always endeavored to relieve them of their burden of guilt, and to give them assurance of pardon and peace. On one occasion, how kindly does he say to a very guilty sinner, "I do not condemn thee, go and sin no more." Instead of intending to add to the burden of guilt which oppresses the sinner, by exhibiting coldly the contrast of his own bright example, or by his severe rebukes, he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Persons who wish to be saved from sin, very often distrust the Savior's willingness to receive them. They acknowledge, in general terms, his kindness and compassion, and think that he is, in all ordinary cases, willing to save the chief of sinners; but they think there is something peculiar in their case, which should prevent them from coming to him in confidence. I have observed that this peculiarity is almost always one of two things:—1. That they do not engage ardently enough in the work of salvation; or, 2. That

Distrust of the Savior's sympathy.

they have often resolved before, and broken their resolutions.

Do not some of you, my readers, feel unwilling to come to the Savior, because you think that you do not feel a sufficient interest in the subject? You know that you are sinners, and you wish to be free from sin. You would like such a friend as I describe the Savior to be, but you have no sufficiently strong conviction, and you think the promises are not for you.

Or perhaps some of you, though you feel a deep interest in the subject, may be discouraged and disheartened by the sins you find yourselves constantly committing, and by your repeatedly broken resolutions. You suppose that the Savior must be wearied out with your continued backslidings and sins, and you are ready to give up the contest, and to think that final holiness and peace is not for you.

Now, there are throughout our land vast multitudes who are vainly endeavoring to make their hearts better, in order to recommend themselves to their Savior's care. You must indeed endeavor by every effort to make your heart better, but not as a means of recommending yourself to the Savior. Come to him at once, just as you are, and seek his sympathy and assistance in the work.

Inquirers after the path of piety are very slow to learn that the Savior is the friend of *sinners*. They will not learn that he comes to help us while we are *in our trials* and difficulties, not after we get *out of them*. How many say in their hearts, I must overcome this sin, or free myself from that temptation, and then I will come to the Savior. I must have clearer views of my own sins, or deeper penitence, or awaken true love to God in my heart, and then, but not till then, can I expect Christ to be my friend. What! do you suppose that it is the office of Jesus Christ to stand aloof from the struggling sinner until he has, by his own unaided

Illustration.

The case of the sick man.

Jesus Christ a physician.

strength, and without assistance or sympathy, finished the contest, and then only to come and offer his congratulations after the victory is won? Is this such a Savior as you imagine the Bible to describe?

At the door of one of the chambers of the house in which you reside, you hear, let us suppose, a moaning sound, as of one in distress. You enter hastily, and find a sick man writhing in pain, and struggling alone with his sufferings. As soon as you understand the case, you say to him,

“We must send for a physician immediately; there is one at the next door who will come in a moment.”

“O no,” groans out the sufferer, “I am in no state to send for a physician. My head aches dreadfully—I am almost distracted with pain. I fear I am dangerously ill.”

“Then you must have a physician immediately,” you reply. “Run and call him,” you say, turning to an attendant, “ask him to come as soon as possible.”

“O stop! stop!” says the sick man, “wait till I get a little easier;—my breath is very short and my pulse very feeble, and besides I have been getting worse and worse every half-hour for some time, and I am afraid there is no hope for me. Wait a little while, and perhaps I may feel better, and then I will send for him.”

You would turn after hearing such words, and say in a gentle voice to the attendant, “He is wandering in mind. Call the physician immediately.”

Now Jesus Christ is a physician. He comes to heal your sins. If you wish to be healed, come to him *at once*, just as you are. The soul that waits for purer motives, or for a deeper sense of guilt, or for a stronger interest in the subject, before it comes to Christ, is a sick person waiting for health before he sends for a physician. Jesus Christ came to help you in *obtaining these feelings*, not to receive you after you have made yourself holy without him. You have, I well

Struggling with temptation.

know, great and arduous struggles to make with sin. Just as certainly as you attempt them alone, you will become discouraged and fail. Come to the Savior before you begin them, for I do assure you, you will need help.

One great object which our Savior had in view in remaining so long in the world, was to understand our *temptations*, and the contests which they bring up in the heart.

It is very often the case, that persons are struggling with temptations and sins almost in solitude, and those to whom they are directly accountable do not appreciate the circumstances in which they are placed, and the efforts which they make to overcome temptation. I presume that teachers very often censure their pupils with a severity which they would not use if they remembered distinctly the temptations and trials of their own childhood. Perhaps a little boy is placed on a seat near his intimate friend, and commanded upon pain of some very severe punishment not to whisper. He tries to refrain, and succeeds perhaps for half an hour in avoiding every temptation. At last some unexpected occurrence or some sudden thought darts into his mind,—his resolutions are forgotten,—the presence of the master, the regulations of the school, and the special prohibition to him, all flit from his mind, and after the forbidden act, which occupied but an instant, is done, he immediately awakes to the consciousness of having disobeyed, and looks up just in time to see the stern eye of his teacher upon him speaking most distinctly of displeasure and of punishment. Now if any severe punishment should follow such a transgression, how disproportionate would it be to the guilt! The boy may indeed have done wrong,—but how slight must the wrong be in the view of any one who could look into the heart, and estimate truly its moral movements in such a case! It is unquestionably true, and every wise teacher is fully aware of it, that in school discipline there is constant danger that the teacher will esti-

The benevolent teacher.

The teacher imagined a scholar.

mate erroneously the moral character of the actions that he witnesses, just because he has forgotten the feelings of childhood. He can not appreciate its temptations or understand its difficulties, and many a little struggler with the inclinations which would draw him from duty, is chilled and discouraged in his efforts, because the teacher never knows that he is making an effort to do his duty, or at least never understands the difficulties and trials which he finds in his way.

Suppose now that such a teacher should say to himself, and suppose that he could by some magic power carry the plan into effect,—“I will become a little child myself, and go to school. I will take these same lessons which I assign, and endeavor to keep, myself, the rules which I have been endeavoring to enforce. I will spend two or three weeks in this way, that I may learn by actual experience what the difficulties and temptations and trials of childhood are.” Suppose he could carry this plan into effect, and laying aside his accumulated knowledge, and that strength of moral principle which long habit had formed, should assume the youth, and the spirits, and all the feelings of childhood, and should take his place in some neighboring school, unknown to his new companions, to partake with them in all their trials and temptations. He toils upon a perplexing lesson, that he may know by experience what the perplexity of childhood is; he obeys the strictest rules, that he may understand the difficulty of obedience; and he exposes himself to the unkindness or oppression of the vicious boys, that he may learn how hard it is patiently to endure them. After fully making the experiment, he resumes his former character and returns to his station of authority. Now if this were done, how cordially, how much better, can he afterward sympathize with his pupils in their trials, and with what confidence can they come to him in all their cares.

Now we have such a Savior as this. The Word was

made flesh, that is, became man and dwelt among us. He took not on him the nature of angels, but the nature of man. "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, *that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest.*" "We have not an high-priest that cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are."

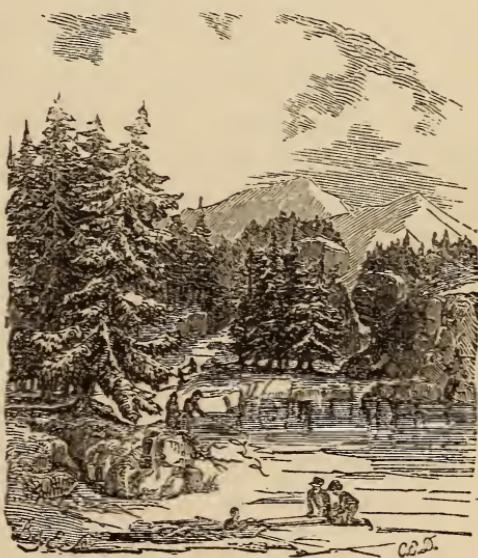
My reader will doubtless observe that this case is somewhat similar to that of Howard, which was described in the former part of this chapter; and perhaps you may imagine that if my paragraphs had been well arranged, this opposition would have come in connection with that. But no. I was then upon the subject of sympathy with *suffering*. I imagined Howard to become a prisoner, that he might understand and sympathize with the *sufferings* of prisoners. Now I am speaking of the subject of *temptation* and *struggle against sin*, and I imagine the teacher to become a child, that he may appreciate the *trials* and *temptations* of childhood.

We may trust in the sympathy of our Savior in this last respect as well as in the other. His disposition to feel compassion and sympathy, and not indignation, in regard to those who had brought themselves into difficulty by doing wrong, was very often manifested while he was upon the earth, and we may be sure his character is not in this respect altered now.

But it is time that I should bring this chapter to a close. The sum and substance of what I have been endeavoring to illustrate in it is this:—If you confess all your sins, and seek the forgiveness of them in the way in which the Gospel points out, and resolve henceforth to lead a life of piety, you will need a friend and helper. You will want sympathy, both in your *sufferings* and in your *struggles with sin*. Jesus Christ will sympathize with you and help you in both.

I once knew a gentleman whose fortune rendered him independent, but whose medical knowledge and skill were of a very high order, that practiced the medical profession among the poor constantly, without fee or reward, for the simple purpose of relieving suffering. The only things necessary to secure his attention were, to be sick, to need his aid, and to send for him. He did not wish his patients to become *convalescent* before he would visit them; nor did he inquire how often they had been sick before. There was one poor lad who took cold, I believe, by breaking through the ice in the winter, at an air-hole, and he was rendered a helpless cripple for years; and yet this gentleman, or some of his family, visited him almost daily during all that time, and instead of getting tired of the patient, they became more and more interested in him to the last. Now our Redeemer is such a physician. He

does not ask any preparation before we send for him; nor does he get tired of us because he has helped us back from our wanderings to duty and happiness a great many times. Some one asked him once, how often he ought to forgive his brother after repeated transgressions. "Shall I forgive him seven times?" was the question. "Forgive," said the Savior, "not only seven times, but seventy times seven." How strange it is, that after this a backsliding Christian



THE AIR-HOLE

The bruised reed.

can ever hesitate to come back at once after he has wandered, with an assurance that God will forgive.

He will not break the bruised reed. How beautiful and striking an illustration of our Redeemer's kindness to those who have sinned. A planter walks out into his grounds, and among the reeds growing there, there is one—young, green and slender—which a rude blast has broken. Its verdant top is drenched in the waters which bathe its root; and perhaps he hesitates for a moment whether to tear it from the spot and throw it away. But no; he raises it to its place, carefully adjusts its bruised stem, and sustains it by a support, till it once more acquires its former strength and beauty. Now Jesus Christ is this planter. Every back-sliding humbled Christian is a bruised reed; and O how many are now thriving and vigorous, that in the hour of humiliation have been saved by his tenderness and care.

Come then to this Friend, all of you. Bring all your interests and hopes and fears to him; he will sympathize in them all. And whenever you have wandered, never hesitate a moment to return.

CHAPTER III.

P R A Y E R.

“Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it.”

As I have on this subject many separate points to discuss, I shall arrange what I have to say under several distinct heads, that the view presented may be the better understood and remembered.

I. *The power of prayer* This subject may be best illustrated by describing a case.

A kind and affectionate father, whose son had arrived at an age which rendered it necessary for him to prepare for the business of life, concluded to send him from home. Their mutual attachment was strong, and though each knew it was for the best, each looked upon the approaching separation with regret. The father felt solicitous for the future character and happiness of his boy, as he was now to go forth into new temptations and dangers; and the son was reluctant to leave the quiet and the happiness of his father's fireside for the bustle of business and the rough exposures of the crowded city, where he was for the future to find a home. The hour of separation, however, at last arrived, and the father says to him at parting,

“My son, be faithful, do your duty, and you will be happy. Remember your parents—the efforts which they have made, and the affection that they now feel for you. Watch against temptation, and shun it: I will supply all your

The father's promises.

Its implied limitations.

Improper requests.

wants. When you wish for any thing, write to me and you shall have it. And may God bless you, and keep you safe and happy."

My reader will observe that this language, which is not fiction, but fact, for it has in substance been addressed in a thousand instances under the circumstances above described, contains a promise to send the son *whatever he shall ask for*. But the meaning of it is not—and no boy would understand it to be—that every possible request which he might make would be certainly granted. Although the promise is made in the few simple words, "whenever you want any thing, write to me and you shall have it," yet the meaning expressed fully would be, whenever you wish for any thing, which as far as you can see is proper for you, if you will let me know it I will send it, unless I see that it is better for you not to have it, or unless there are other special reasons which prevent my complying with your request."

Now a boy may in such a case make a great many requests which the father might refuse without being considered by any one as breaking his promise.

1. He may ask something which the father knows would, in the end, *injure him*. Suppose he should request his father to supply him with double his usual quantity of pocket money, and the father should see clearly that the effect of granting the request would be to cultivate in him careless and extravagant habits of expenditure, and to divert his attention from his business. In such a case the father would undoubtedly refuse, and no one would imagine that he was breaking his promise. The boy, if he had acted right, would not have asked such a favor.

2. He may ask something which, if granted, would *interfere with the rights or happiness of others*. There was a watch, we will imagine, hanging up in his father's house, used by all the family,—the only time-piece accessible to

Requests in an improper manner.

The letter.

them. Now suppose that the boy, growing selfish and vain, and thinking that his importance among his comrades would be increased by his wearing a watch, should write to ask his father to send this family watch to him. Who would think that his father would be bound to comply on account of his parting promise to his son to supply all his wants? Christians very often make such selfish requests, and wonder why their prayers are not heard. A farmer who has one field which needs watering, will pray for rain with great earnestness, forgetting that there are ten thousand fields all around his own, and that they perhaps need the sun. A mother who has a boy at sea, will pray for prosperous winds *for him*, forgetting that the ocean is whitened with sails all under God's care, and that the breeze which bears one onward, must retard another. But more on this subject presently.

3. He may ask *in an improper manner*. Suppose the father should take from the post-office a letter in his son's handwriting, and on breaking the seal, should read as follows:—

“DEAR FATHER,—

“You *must* let me come home next week to Christmas. I wanted to come last year, but you would not let me, and now *I must come*. I wish you to write me immediately, and send the letter by the return post, saying that I may come

“I am your dutiful son,

“_____.”

Who would think that a father ought to grant a request made in such a way as this? It is to be feared that Christians sometimes bring demands, instead of requests, to God.

I have mentioned now three cases in which the father might, without breaking his promise, refuse the requests of his boy; where it would be *injurious to him, unjust to*

Our Savior's promise.

Prayers denied.

others, or where the request is made in an improper manner. All promises of such a sort as this are universally considered as liable to these exceptions.

Our Savior says to us, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, in my name, he will do it.” This is common language, such as men address to men, and is to be understood exactly in the same way—in just such a sense, and with just such exceptions. The language means, if it is honestly used, that requests on our part will, in ordinary cases, have a real influence with the Creator in regard to things entirely beyond our control. It must mean, that, *generally*, all our proper requests will be granted. At the same time it must be liable to the exceptions above stated, for such exceptions apply in all similar cases. God must reserve the right to deny our requests when they are made in an improper spirit, and when they ask what would injure us, or interfere with the general good.

If any of you have, in accordance with the views presented in the two preceding chapters, confessed your past sins and chosen Jesus Christ for your friend, you will take great pleasure in bringing your requests to God. And you may, in doing this, sometimes pray for success in some enterprise, when God sees that it is on the whole best you should fail. A man may ask that God will place him in some important station of influence or usefulness, when the eye that can see the whole, discovers that the general good will be promoted by another arrangement. Thus in many similar ways your prayers may sometimes come within the excepted cases, and then God will not grant them. These cases, however, it may be hoped, you will generally avoid, and thus in a vast majority of instances your prayers will be heard.

There is even among Christians a great deal of distrust of the power of prayer. Some think that prayer exerts a good influence upon their own hearts, and thus they continue

the practice, without, however, having any very cordial belief that they are really listened to and granted *as requests*, by the great Jehovah. Many persons imagine that prayer has an efficacy in some such way as this: a man asks God to protect and bless him in his business; by offering the prayer every day, he is reminded of his dependence, he thinks of the necessity of his own industry and patient effort, and thus, through the influence of his prayer, the causes of prosperity are brought to operate more fully in his case, and prosperity come.

This is indeed often one of the happy results of believing prayer; but it by no means embraces the whole import of the promise, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, *he* shall do it.” The Father shall do it. This is a promise that *God* shall *do* something that we ask him to do,—not simply that the natural effect of our asking will be favorable in its influence upon us.

There is another way in which it seems to us there is a great deal of want of faith in God in regard to the efficacy of prayer. It is often said that requests may not be granted in the precise form in which they were offered, but that they are always answered in some way or other. A mother, for instance, who has a son at sea, prays morning and evening for his safe return. Letter after letter comes, assuring her of his continued safety, until at last the sad news arrives that his ship has been dashed upon a rock or sunk in the waves. Now can it be said that the mother’s prayer was granted? Suppose that she was, by this afflicting providence, weaned from the world and prepared for heaven, and thus inconceivably benefited by the event. Was this, in any common or correct use of language, granting the request in another form, or was it denying it because it was inconsistent with her greatest good? Suppose a child asks his father to let him keep a knife that he

The sick man unexpectedly cured.

has found, and the father takes it away, knowing that he will probably injure himself with it. Is this granting the request in another form? No. We ought, whenever the particular request we make is not granted, to consider it a denial, and to suppose that it comes under one of the cases of exceptions I have already specified.

There is, indeed, such a thing as granting a request in another form from that in which it was made. A family, one of whose members is in feeble health, prays for that member, that God would restore him. They come sincerely and earnestly to the throne of grace, and ask God to spare his life and make him well. Instead however of growing better, he grows suddenly worse. He is attacked with violent sickness, and his friends think that their prayers can not be heard, and suppose that they must follow him to the grave. The sickness however soon passes away, and instead of carrying him to the tomb, it produces by means of some mysterious influence which is in such cases often exerted upon the constitution, such effects that the patient rises from his sick-bed with renewed bodily powers, and as his strength gradually returns, he finds that his constitution is renewed and health entirely restored. Now this is granting the request, because the *thing requested*, that is, the restoration of health, is obtained, though the manner was unexpected; but if the man should die, no matter what great benefits resulted from his death, it is certainly not right to say that the request was granted in any way. It was *denied*, because God saw it was best that it should be denied.

Let us then keep constantly in view the fact, that our petitions are and must be often denied,—positively and absolutely refused. The language which our Savior uses, though without any specified exceptions, contains the exceptions that in all human language are in all such cases

implied. The feelings however which, in this view of the subject, we ought to cherish, may properly be presented under the following head.

II. *The duty of a submissive spirit in prayer* We ought unquestionably to bring a great many requests to God, relating to our daily pursuits. We ought to express to him our common desires, ask success in our common enterprises and plans. Young persons, it seems to me, ought to do this more than they do. They ought to bring all their little interests and concerns, morning and evening, to their Friend above. Whatever interests you, as I have already once or twice remarked, will interest him. Bring to him freely your troubles and cares, whatever they may be, and express all your wants. If the young can not come to God *with their own appropriate and peculiar concerns*, they are in reality without a protector. If however we are in the habit of bringing all our wants to God, we shall often ask for something which it is far better for us not to have. We can not always judge correctly; but unless we know that what we wish for is dangerous, or that it will be injurious, it is proper to ask for it. If we do or might know, to request it would be obviously wrong. David prayed very earnestly that his child might live, but God thought it not best to grant the petition. David did right to pray, for he probably did not know but that the request might be safely granted. Let us feel therefore when we come with our petitions, that perhaps God will think it best for us that they should be denied.

This is peculiarly the case in praying for deliverance from danger. Our hearts may be relieved and lightened by committing ourselves to God's care, but we can never feel on that account *sure* that we are safe. God very often makes sickness, or a storm at sea, or the lightning, or any other source of common danger and alarm, the means of

The packet.

removing a Christian from the world. You do not know but that he will remove you in this way. The next time a thunder storm arises in the west, it may be God's design to bring one of its terrific bolts upon your head, and you can not of course avert it by simply asking God to spare you. He will listen to your prayer, take it into kind consideration, and if you ask in a proper spirit, he will probably give you a calm and happy heart, even in the most imminent danger. But you can not be sure you will escape the lightning. The ground of your peace must be, that God will do *what is best*, not that he will certainly do *what you wish*.

From one of the small seaport towns of New England, a packet once set sail for Boston.* These packets, which are intended to carry passengers, have one large cabin. The berths (which perhaps I ought to inform some of my young readers, are a species of shelves, upon which passengers at sea sleep, one above another) are arranged around this cabin, and a movable partition which can be thrown open by day, divides the room at night into two parts. On board one of these packets then, a few years ago, a number of persons, ladies and gentlemen, previously entire strangers to each other, found themselves slowly sailing out of an eastern harbor, on a coasting voyage of about two hundred miles. They did not know how long they were to be together, what adventures might befall them, or what dangers they might share. They were however to spend their time in the same room, and as they were tossing upon the waves in the same vessel, a sense of common interest and of common danger brought them at once to terms of intimacy.

* These packets have long since been superseded by steamboats, and trains of cars. The passage is, however, allowed to stand as originally written.

The next morning there was scarcely a breath of air. The vessel heaved gently on the water, whose surface was polished like glass, though it swelled and sunk with the undulations of distant storms. In the tedium of waiting for wind, each one of the passengers and crew amused himself in his own way. Here you might see a cluster talking, and there two or three passengers gathering around a sailor who was letting down his line for fish. Others in various places, had their books.

A Christian traveler who was present, sat down upon the quarter-deck, and opened a little bundle of books and newspapers, and tracts, which he had provided for the occasion.



THE PACKET BECALMED.

Presently a gentleman who had been sitting for half an hour, gazing, for want of other employment, upon every

Books and tracts.

The long passage.

sprig of sea-weed or floating bubble that he could see, advanced to him, and asked, "Will you lend me something to read?"

"Certainly, sir, any thing I have; but most of my supply here is of a religious character, and I do not know whether you will take any interest in it."

The gentleman replied that he *should* take an interest in it; and he selected a paper or a tract, took his seat again, and began to read. Presently a lady made the same request;—others looked wishfully toward the books, but hesitated to ask for them. Our traveler observing this, said to all within hearing,

"If any others of the company would like any thing I have, I should be happy to have them take it. I always carry a supply of reading when I travel, though I select my books, perhaps, too much to suit my own taste alone. What I have here is chiefly of a religious character, and it may not be so generally interesting on that account. You are heartily welcome, however, to any thing that I have."

The books and tracts were soon generally in circulation, the passengers were nearly all busy in reading them, and the time passed swiftly away. Our traveler became known as a Christian; and were I now upon the subject of Christian influence, I might describe many interesting occurrences which took place, the Christian acquaintances which he formed, and the conversations which he had with various persons on board the vessel. But I am going so much into detail in this story, that I fear you have almost lost sight of our subject, which is the duty of praying to God with the feeling that he will, after all, do as he pleases about granting the request. I must hasten to the conclusion of the narrative.

The passage was an uncommonly long one. The company hoped to reach their port in two days, but after *ten* had

The approaching storm.

The storm increases.

passed away, they were still far from Boston, night was coming on, and what was still worse, the captain, who stood anxiously at the helm, said that there were signs of an approaching storm. A dark haze extended itself over the whole southern sky. The swell of the sea increased. The rising wind moaned in most melancholy tones through the rigging. The captain gave orders to take in sail, to make every thing snug about the vessel, and to have supper prepared earlier than usual, "Because," said he, "I expect, from the looks of the sky yonder, that an hour hence you will not manage a cup of tea very handily."

The passengers ate their supper in silence. Their hearts were full of foreboding fears. The captain endeavored to encourage them. He said that they were not far from Boston. He hoped soon to see the light. If they could make out to get into the harbor before it began to blow very hard, they should be safe. "Yes," said he, "I am in hopes to land you all safely at the T before ten o'clock.* Unless we can get fairly into the harbor, however, I shall have to put about and stand out to sea; for if we are to have a storm, we must not stay tossing about near the rocks."

The storm increased. Sail after sail was reefed or taken in, but still the spirits of the company were sustained by knowing that they were advancing toward Boston, and by the hope that they should soon stand upon the firm shore. So great, however, was the pitching and rolling of the ship, that most of the passengers retreated to their berths and braced themselves there. A few of the more hardy or experienced remained upon deck, clinging to the masts or to the rigging, and watching with intense interest the distant glimmering of the Boston light, which had a short time before come into view.

"We are not very far from the light," said the captain, "but it blows pretty hard."

* The T, a noted wharf at Boston.

They watch the light.

The storm increases.

Going about.

“Do you think we shall get in?” asked a passenger.

“I do not know,” said he, shaking his head, “it is a bad night. I will, however, try for it.”

The passengers watched the light. They observed that the captain did not like to talk while he was at the helm, and they forbore to ask him questions. They knew that as long as they were going toward the light there was hope, and they watched it therefore with a very eager eye. Sometimes the ship would veer a little from her course, and as the light moved off to the right or to the left, they were filled with solicitude lest the captain was going to abandon the effort and put out again to sea.

He kept however steadily on for another half-hour, though wind and wave seemed to do their utmost to compel him to return. The light grew larger and brighter as the vessel approached it, but the wind increased so rapidly that the captain seemed much perplexed to know what to do. He put the helm into the hands of a sailor, and went forward and stood there looking upon the dark gloomy horizon until he was completely drenched with the spray. In a few minutes he returned suddenly.

“ ‘Tis of no use,” said he; and then taking the helm again, he called out in his loudest voice, to the sailors who were before, which, however, the roaring of the waves almost drowned, “READY, ABOUT.”

The sailors answered, “READY.”

A moment after, the captain’s voice was again heard, in the loud but monotonous tone of command, “HELM’S A-LEE.”

There was bustle at the bows of the ship. A great sail flapped in the wind with a sound of thunder; the ropes rattled; the boom swung with violence across the deck; and the bow, which had been pointed directly to the light-house, their only star of hope, now swept swiftly around the horizon, until it left it behind them. The vessel plunged into the

Splitting of the topsail.

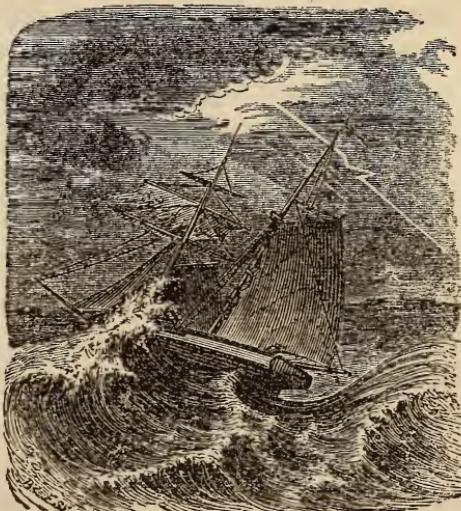
Danger.

waves ; and to complete this scene of terror, a loud sound, like a clap of rattling thunder, burst close over their heads, arousing every passenger, and producin^g universal alarm. It was the splitting of the topsail.

The melancholy intelligence was soon spread among the passengers below, that the effort to reach Boston was abandoned, and that they were now standing out to the open sea, and that consequently they must be all night exposed unsheltered to the violence of the storm. Although the commotion had been already enough to fill the passengers with fear, yet

to an eye accustomed to the ocean, there had not been any real danger. But real danger soon came. The wind increased, and the vessel labored so much in struggling against its fury, that even the captain thought it doubtful whether they should ever see the land.

In commencing this description, I did not intend to have given so full a narrative of the circumstances of this storm, and perhaps the reader has almost forgotten the subject which we are considering, and the purpose for which this incident is introduced. The subject is the feelings with which prayer should be offered in danger, and the narrative was introduced simply to present a distinct idea of a situation of danger, on the deep. The passengers in this packet were now in very



GOING ABOUT.

Protection never certain.

Object of prayer in danger.

imminent danger. They were all in their berths below, for so violent was the motion of the vessel, that it was not safe to attempt to stand. The wish was intimated by some of the company, and the desire soon extended to all, that a prayer should be offered ; and they looked to our Christian traveler to express their petitions at the throne of grace.

Many persons may have such conceptions of the nature of prayer, as to suppose that if this company should now sincerely unite in commending themselves to God's protection, he would take care of them, and that they might feel perfectly safe. Many cases have occurred in which Christians, who have been in the midst of danger, have fled to Jehovah for protection, and have had their fears immediately quelled, and felt a calm and happy assurance that God would bring them through in safety. But such an assurance is not usually well grounded. Are real Christians *never* lost at sea ? Do real Christians who on their sick beds pray that God will restore them to health, *never die* ? Is a Christian who, on commencing a journey asks divine protection, never overturned in a coach ? Is the family which always asks, in its evening prayer, that God will grant them quiet repose, never called up by the sudden sickness of a child, or aroused at midnight by a cry of fire ? Facts universally testify that God does not grant every request. He reserves to himself the right, after hearing the petition, to grant or to deny, as may seem best to him.

You will perhaps say, Of what avail is it then, to pray to God in danger, if we can have no assurance that we shall be saved ? It avails much. You can not be sure that you will be certainly preserved *from that danger*, but you can rest calmly and peacefully in the assurance that God will do *what is on the whole for the best*. "And will this feeling," you ask, "enable any one to rest in peace while he is out at sea in a storm, and in danger every moment of sinking ?"

Yes, it will, if fully possessed. If we could feel assured that God was our friend, and if we had entire confidence in him, no danger would terrify us; we should be calm and happy in all situations. Christians have very often been calm and happy when not *danger* merely but *certain death* was approaching, so strong has been their confidence in God. Even Socrates, who had no revelation to guide him, and to whom the future must have been consequently very dark and uncertain, even he met his fate not merely with fortitude, but with calmness and peace, through the trust he reposed in his heavenly Protector.

He was in a cold dungeon, where his enemies had imprisoned him from jealousy of his extensive influence in behalf of virtue. He had been condemned to die, and in a few days the cup of poison was to be given him to drink. His wife came to his prison to bid him farewell; but she was so overwhelmed with agitation and sorrow that she could not remain. His other friends were around him in tears,—but he was all the time unmoved. He talked of the principles of duty, and of his hopes of a happy immortality after the poison should have done its work. Presently they brought him the fatal cup. His friends were overwhelmed with the most agitating sorrow,—but he did not fear. He seemed to confide in divine protection, and took the poison from the jailer's hands and drank it all. He walked about a little while, and then lay down upon his bed and died. And shall a Christian, who knows the affection of his heavenly Father, and who is sure that there is a future world of peace and joy, shall he refuse to be calm in danger, unless he can first be sure that he shall certainly be preserved uninjured? No. When we ask God's protection in danger, we may, in all ordinary cases, expect protection. He has promised to grant our requests, unless special reasons prevent. Now as we may not know what these special reasons are, we can not be

True composure in danger.

The prayer.

certain of security, and consequently the foundation of our peace and happiness at such times must be, not the belief that we are certainly safe, but a calm and happy acquiescence in God's will. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge—still sparrows often do fall. All that we can be absolutely certain of is, that whatever happens to us will come with the knowledge and permission of our best and greatest Friend—and every calamity which comes in this way, we ought to be willing to meet.

But to return to our ship. The passengers were all below. It was no longer safe for them to attempt to stand in any part of the vessel, and the Christian traveler, looking out from the berth to which he had retreated, called upon God to save them from their common danger. What prayer he offered I do not know. I learned the circumstances of the danger of this packet, first from a father on shore who was awaiting the arrival of his boy, who was on board when the storm came on, and afterward from several of the passengers when they had all safely reached the land. I do not therefore know what the prayer was, but that I may the more distinctly convey to my young readers an idea of the spirit with which prayer in danger should be offered, I will write one which, it seems to me, might with propriety, on such an occasion, be offered. Let us imagine then that the terrified passengers in their various berths in the dark cabin listen and hear, as well as the howling of the tempest and the roaring of the waves will permit, the following petition, in which they endeavor cordially to join :

“ Almighty God, thou hast promised to be with two or three who unite to call upon thee, wherever they are ; we come, therefore, with full confidence that thou art with us now, and that thou, who dost rule wind and waves, art really present, to hear what we have to say as we come before thee.

The prayer at sea.

“ Grant, Holy Spirit, that *all* of us who are now present, exposed to this danger, may come with our whole hearts to thee. When we are in health and safety we break thy commands and neglect our duty, and then, when danger comes, and no arm but thine can help, we are ashamed and afraid to come to thee. But O, our Father, let not one of us hesitate now. We thank thee for teaching us, by so irresistible a proof, how dependent we are upon thee. May we all be willing to learn the lesson, and may we bow humbly before thee now, even if we have never bowed before.

“ We come to ask that thou wilt protect us in this danger, and bring us safely to our homes. Thou canst protect from greater dangers than these. Wilt thou protect us. Save us from finding our watery grave here in the deep, and save our beloved parents, and brothers, and sisters, at home, from the anxiety they must even now feel, and from the anguish such tidings of our destruction must give. Almighty Father, save us, we pray thee.

“ Nevertheless, not our will but thine be done. We see but a part, and thou seest the whole. If thou seest it to be best that we should go down here to a watery grave, we would acquiesce in thy will. We have solemnly given ourselves to thee, and chosen thee for our portion. We have, if we love thee at all, committed ourselves to thy care and to thy disposal. We have rejoiced in this dependence upon thee when we have been in health and safety, and we will not shrink from our covenant to be thine, now we are in danger. Do with us as seemeth good in thy sight, only give to us all a calm and happy acquiescence in thy will. Pardon our sins, so that we may be at peace with thee; and whether we are to live or die, may our hearts be thine, through Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.”

Such may have been the spirit of the prayer. Such I

| Effects. | Sincerity of prayer. | Ardor in prayer. |
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presume was the spirit of the petition offered on this occasion. Every heart which will sincerely offer such a prayer when in danger, will feel relieved through the influence of it from solicitude and fear. I am aware that in a case of imminent exposure of life, the terror excited is often a physical feeling which moral causes will not fully control. Still this calm acquiescence in God's superior wisdom and power will do more than any other feeling can to produce peace.

III. *Sincerity of prayer.* Prayer is, in all ordinary cases, and it ought to be, a calm and peaceful exercise, not an agitating one. Many persons waste the hour of prayer in endeavoring to feel some deep agitation, imagining that sincere and acceptable prayer can not be offered without it. You must be sincere when you pray, but you may be calm. Read our Savior's model of prayer—"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, &c." What a peaceful, quiet spirit it breathes! The great question in regard to your prayer being acceptable is this: Do you wish for any thing which you know that no one but God can grant, and are you willing to ask him for it in the name of Jesus Christ? If so, come at once and ask him. Ask with that degree of feeling which your interest in the request prompts, and no more. If you wish to increase your *feeling*, you can not do it in any way, except by increasing your *interest* in the *request*. You may give additional vividness to your idea of the value of the object sought, by thinking of it, and considering how great a blessing it would be to you if granted, and thus you may increase your ardor in prayer. But all *direct attempts* to produce this ardor by effort will fail; or if they succeed in producing some sort of excitement, it is not a healthy, acceptable interest in prayer.

Now, after this explanation, those who read this can easily

decide whether they are prepared to offer, this night, acceptable prayer to God. Do you wish *that God should take care of you* while you sleep ? I do not mean, do you wish to be safe—every body wishes to be safe ; but do you wish to *have God at your bedside*, protecting you ? If you do not, if the feeling of his presence would be a burden to you, and a restraint, of course you will not ask him to come. But suppose that you are desirous of having him present, are you then willing to ask him ? I do not inquire whether you are willing to struggle a long time with your heart to awaken deep feeling enough to justify, in your opinion, coming to God. Are you willing, as you retire to rest to-night, to breathe a short and simple petition to God, asking him to come and be your friend and protector for the night,—acknowledging that you do not deserve his protection, and that you ask it in the name of Jesus Christ ? If you are willing to do this, and if you actually do it, and if you ask with that degree of feeling which your sincere desire for God's protection prompts, you may lie down in peace, sure that you have offered acceptable prayer.

But here I must mention a difficulty which many and many a time has been brought to me by serious-minded persons who wish to pray to God, but who think that they can not pray aright. I presume this difficulty has occurred to many who will read this chapter. I fancy I can perceive thoughts like these passing through the mind of some thoughtful, conscientious reader, who has taken up this book honestly desiring to find in it religious instruction :

“ If I understand the author right, he says that if I to-night pray to God to protect me, just *because I want protection*, or rather because *I wish for his protection*, that will be acceptable prayer. But it seems to me that that would be mere selfishness. I wish for a great many things which I know none but God can grant, but if I ask them only *because I feel*

Difficulty.

Reply.

the need of them, it is only a selfish desire for my own happiness, and I can not expect to be heard. I should like such a friend as Jesus Christ, that I might come to him in all my trials and troubles, and seek strength from him in times of temptation. But then this is all love of my own happiness. I can not be happy in sin ;—there is a foreboding and a burden all the time pressing upon my heart, from which I wish to be relieved. But unless I have a higher motive than a wish to obtain peace and happiness myself, I can not expect to be heard.”

I have no doubt there are multitudes who are substantially in this state of mind. They are deterred by this difficulty from coming cordially to their great Friend above. I have stated the difficulty as distinctly and fully as I can, adopting as nearly as possible the words in which it has often been presented to me. I hope you will attend carefully to my reply, and if it is satisfactory now, lay it up in your memories, and never be embarrassed by this difficulty again.

My reply is substantially this—that a *desire for the peace and happiness of piety* is a perfectly proper motive for coming to God. It is the motive which the Bible everywhere presents. It is not, in any proper sense of the term, selfishness.

First, I say it is a perfectly proper motive. God is our great Creator and Protector, and he made us weak and dependent, but desirous of peace and happiness, for the very purpose of having us look to him for it. He never intended to make men a race of stoics—each one entirely indifferent in respect to his own personal happiness. He himself wishes to see *all happy*, and *all happy in him*; and he wishes us to desire and seek this happiness for ourselves, and to come to him for it.

Again, I say that *the Bible* everywhere presents the promised peace and happiness of piety as the motive why we

Rest for the weary.**The prodigal son.****The nobleman.**

should seek it. Jesus stood and cried in a great concourse of people, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." How strange that any one can imagine after this, that a love of rest and a desire to be relieved of burden, is not a proper motive for coming to Jesus Christ! The prodigal son, perhaps the most striking and complete emblem of the penitent sinner which the Bible contains, says, "How many hired servants of my father have bread enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father." Who would think, after reading this parable, that any sinner would be afraid to come to the Savior because his motive is to have his wants supplied? Look at the thousands who came to our Savior to be healed of their diseases, or to be rescued from some suffering. Did he ever turn them away because they came for their own benefit? A nobleman came once. His son was at the point of death. Parental affection urged him on. He came and begged the Savior to come and save his son. He was so far from being under the influence of any high philosophical notions of faith and disinterestedness, that when the Savior began to speak of faith and the influence of miracles upon it, he almost interrupted him by saying, "Come down, ere my child die." And did the Savior repulse him, and say he was influenced by wrong motives? It was not a wrong motive. He *wanted happiness*, and he was willing *to come to Jesus Christ for it*. And God wishes to see the whole human race eager for the pure joys of piety, and flocking around his throne to obtain them. O, if any of you are weary with the burden of sin, and long for the peace and happiness of piety, come boldly for it. Never fear that God will call it selfishness, and drive you away.

Once more; I said this could not be called selfishness; desiring the happiness of virtue, and taking the proper measures to preserve it, never is called selfishness, except

Illustration.

The desk.

The father's refusal.

by persons lost in the mazes of metaphysics. Suppose two children, whose parents had taught them habits of regularity and order so fully that they take pleasure in the systematic arrangement of all their little property, come and ask their father to let them have a large desk which stands useless in the garret, to bring to their little room, as a place of deposit for their books, and papers, and toys. Suppose now he should inquire of the boys, and should find that they have planned the disposal of their effects exactly, in the shelves and drawers of the desk, and are anticipating much enjoyment from the expected acquisition. He sees their countenances brightened with anticipation as they wait breathlessly to catch his answer, and then to fly away and commence the removal. Now suppose the father should stop them by such absurd words as these :

“ My boys, I am very sorry to find that you are so selfish. I strongly suspect that the reason why you want that desk is because you expect some pleasure from it. Perhaps you think you will enjoy your property more by seeing it well arranged in such a good storehouse, or perhaps you think you can spend rainy afternoons in your room more pleasantly if you have it. Now, that is very wrong ; that is selfishness. To desire any thing for the sake of the happiness which it affords, is selfishness. Unless you can ask from some better motive than that, I can not grant your requests.”

I do not think that any gravity of countenance which could be assumed would lead the boys to imagine that their father could be serious in this. Certainly no parent would ever say it ; and if earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his holy Spirit to them that ask him ? that is, to them that ask him for it as *a good gift*,—something which is to do good to them.

But what is selfishness. Why, if the desk, instead of lying useless in the garret, was used by the older brothers, and the younger wished to take it away from them unreasonably and unjustly, *that* would be selfishness. A disposition to *encroach upon the rights and enjoyments of others* in order to secure our own, is selfishness; and we must not come to God with this spirit. If any one, however, desires peace and happiness, and is satisfied that God only can give it, let him come and and ask. “Ho, every one *that thirsteth*, come ye to the waters.” God never will repulse you, because *thirst* urges you to come.

It is a very common impression among young persons, and perhaps some of mature minds are not entirely free from the same perplexity, that in order to render prayer acceptable, the Christian must have a full belief that his request will be granted. This is called the prayer of faith. Hence many persons, when they strongly desire some spiritual blessing for themselves or others, make a great deal of effort, when they pray for it, *to believe that they shall receive it*. Come with me to the morning prayer-meeting. A few Christians whose duties of business press upon them during the day, assemble by the gray light of the dawn around the early fire of some Christian neighbor. They read and reflect a moment upon a few verses of the Bible. They sing a hymn, and are just about to kneel before God in order to unite in prayer for his blessing upon themselves and upon their families and neighbors during the day, when perhaps one of the number addresses the meeting as follows :

“My brethren, we come this morning to ask great blessings, but *we must have faith*, or we can not expect that God will hear us. He has promised to hear us, and to give us whatever we ask, *believing*. Let us believe then firmly and cordially that God will hear us. And let us ask for great

The morning prayer-meeting.

Prayer for a revival.

blessings. God is ready to give us the greatest, if we only have faith."

They then unite in prayer; and there kneels with them, in a corner of the room, unnoticed perhaps by all but God, a young disciple who has hesitatingly asked of the master of the house permission to enjoy the privilege of joining that circle of prayer. She understands the exhortation which was given to mean, that she must fully believe that the blessings to be asked will certainly be granted. She tries therefore, as she listens to the words of the prayer, to believe this. Perhaps the first request is that God would pour out his Spirit upon all present, and purify them, and keep them that day devoted to his service and free from all sin. Now she thinks it right to pray for this; she sincerely desires it, but she can not really believe that it will be fully granted. Then she reproves herself for her unbelief; that is, for the feeling that it is not probable that all present will be perfectly pure and holy during that day. She struggles against this feeling, but she can not conquer it. Belief rests on *evidence*, not on *determination*.

The next petition is for a powerful revival of true religion in that neighborhood; that, by a divine influence exerted over their hearts, Christians may be led to love their Maker more and to serve him better; and that those who are living in sin may be universally awakened to a conviction of their guilt and danger, and be persuaded to serve Jehovah. Now our young Christian sincerely desires this,—she hopes for it,—but she is distressed because she can not cordially believe that it will certainly come, and she considers this feeling a want of faith. She rises from her posture of devotion anxious and unhappy, because she does not feel absolutely sure that what she has asked is on the whole for the best, and that it will certainly be granted.

Difficulty.

God decides.

Now all her difficulty arises from misunderstanding the nature of the faith which ought to be exercised in prayer. The remarks made meant, or they ought to have meant, that we are to come to God confident that he will do *what is on the whole for the best*,—not positive that he will do exactly *what we ask*. God never has given assemblies of Christians authority to mark out a course for him to pursue, in such a sense as that he shall be bound to pursue it. He has promised to give us what we ask; but still the exceptions, universally understood to be implied by this language in other cases, are attached to it in this. We must offer our petitions, trusting in God,—believing, as the Bible expresses it, that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; but after we have offered our most earnest requests, we must leave the matter with him. This is what is meant by *the prayer of faith*, so often alluded to by Christian ministers. And this was the kind of faith our Savior required of those who came to him to be healed. “Believest thou,” said he, “that I am *able* to do this?” not that I *shall* do it. When the apostles and brethren came together to pray for Peter, they were so far from believing that their prayer for deliverance would be granted, that they were incredulous when they saw him. They trusted in God, and believed that he would do what was right. This *confidence in him* was the faith that they exercised. Believing that ye shall receive them, then, must mean—believing that God is able and willing to grant, except in those few cases where imperious reasons compel him to deny. He sees many material considerations in every case which are entirely beyond our view, and we must accordingly always leave the final decision wholly with him.

It is very often said that prayer for *spiritual blessings* will always be heard and granted. But we can be no more absolutely certain in this case than in others. God does often

The mother.

God decides.

withhold the influences of his Spirit, as we all know full well. Who of us can tell what are the causes? Look at yonder mother. She has an only son. Her first prayer in regard to him was that God would make him his. She consecrated him to his Maker's service at his earliest breath. She rocked him to sleep in infancy, singing a hymn of acknowledgment that he was the Lord's. As soon as he could understand the lesson, she taught him his duty to his great Creator. She has often knelt with him in prayer, and her whole heart is set upon having her only son devoted to the service of God. But all her efforts are fruitless, and her prayers are not answered. Her son grows up in indifference about God, which perhaps becomes, when he has arrived at maturity, open hostility. How many such mothers there are! She was praying, too, for spiritual blessings, for the *conversion of a son to God*, but the sovereign Ruler leaves him, notwithstanding these supplications, for a time at least, to his own chosen way.

Yes, God is a sovereign. He dispenses *all* his favors as he himself thinks best. He listens to our requests, and takes them into kind consideration, but he reserves to himself the right to make the ultimate decision. Let us come to him then with real sincerity, and with a deep sense of our need of the blessings we ask, but always with this humble feeling, that God sees farther than we, and can judge better,—and that he will himself make the ultimate decision in regard to every thing we ask.

And we must remember that this is just as true with regard to spiritual blessings as to any other. The cause of religion advances in the world in a manner which we can not predict or account for. I do not pretend to say precisely how far and in what respects this progress depends upon the agency of man, and how far upon power which is in the hands of God. But every one, whatever may be his ideas

Case supposed.

God a sovereign.

Submissive spirit.

of the boundlessness of human freedom, acknowledges that a most important agency in determining where the Gospel shall triumph, and where it shall fail, and in regulating its progress throughout the earth, rests in the hands of the Supreme. Now what Christian is there who can understand the principles which guide Jehovah in the exercise of the power which he so obviously possesses? How many secretly think that the sudden conversion of a whole city, perhaps, to God, would be a glorious achievement of the Redeemer, and fancy that if they had the power over the heart which God possesses, they would produce the effect at once, and exhibit the magnificent spectacle of the undisputed reign of holiness and peace in a community of one hundred thousand. Suppose now every Christian in some great city were to unite in a sincere and heartfelt prayer that God would pour out his Spirit universally among them, and in a single day awaken all the multitudes around them to piety. It is indeed unquestionably true, that if this united prayer should be offered, and should be accompanied by the efforts which sincerity in the prayer would insure, most uncommon effects would follow. But who believes that the whole city would be converted in a day? No one. Why? Because this is not according to the analogy of God's working in spreading the Gospel. And why does he not work in this way, converting whole communities at once, leading them to him by his own direct agency upon the heart, as he now often leads individuals in silence and solitude? Why does not God work in this manner? Some one may say, because Christians are so cold and negligent in duty. Why then does not the power which raised up Paul, raise up thousands like him now, and enkindling within them the spirit and devotedness of the great apostle, and send them forth to bring the world at once to him?—Who can tell?

No: we can not direct. God guides by his own wisdom

Prayers for the young.

Danger of perversion.

the chariot of his coming. We can ask, but we can not dictate. If we attempt to take the reins, he holds them up far above our reach, and the wheels roll on where God points the way.

The experienced Christian who reads these remarks, intended to show that God really controls and directs every thing relating to the progress of piety in the world, will immediately say, "How liable are we to pervert this truth, so as to excuse our own neglect of duty." Yes, it is so. Men are everywhere so prone to throw off responsibility from themselves, that the minister of the Gospel is often almost afraid to vindicate fully and cordially the supreme and unbounded power which God exercises over the human heart, for fear that men will lose their sense of their own accountability. A mother will ask that God will change the hearts of her children, and sometimes wait, as she expresses it, for God's time to come, while she in the mean time does nothing, or at most only goes over a formal round of duties, without any of that spirit, and enterprise, and ingenuity which she would exercise if she knew that something depended upon her own efforts. But this perversion of scripture truth is not necessary or unavoidable. However difficult it may be for us to understand how man can be free and fully accountable, while God retains so much direct power over his heart as the Bible so distinctly describes,—*it is possible* cordially to feel the accountability, and at the same time sincerely to acknowledge the dependence. Look at the case of that Christian teacher. She prays most earnestly that God would come and bless the school to which she belongs. She brings individual cases in secrecy and solitude before God. She prays that faults may be forgiven—froward dispositions softened—and all brought under the influence of Christian love. She asks that God will pour out his Spirit and diffuse peace and happiness over the school-room improving every charac-

The humble yet active teacher.

Conclusion.

The ship.

ter, purifying and ennobling every heart, and in making the dejected happy, and the happy happier still. She has seen such an influence diffused over a school—she knows that it is an influence from above, and she looks to Him who rules all human hearts to come into her circle with his benign influences once more. Now, does she after this go away and spend her time in inaction, on the ground that God only can change the heart, and that she has done all that it is in her power to do by simply bringing the case before *him*? No, she comes to her morning duties in the school-room with a heart full of desire *to do something* to procure what she has asked God to bestow. And she does accomplish something. By her kindness she wins her companions to her confidence and love, and in thousand nameless ways which never can be described, but which a heart full of love will always be discovering, she carries forward very effectually in her little circle the cause for which she prays.

It is so universally. When a minister allows his sense of his entire dependence on God to become feeble or indistinct, his efforts, instead of increasing, diminish. It may be called the Christian paradox, that he who, in theory, ascribes least efficacy to human efforts and most to the Spirit of God in the salvation of men, is ordinarily most indefatigable in those very efforts which he knows are *of themselves* utterly fruitless and vain.

And here I might close this long chapter, by urging my readers to commence immediately the practice of bringing all their wants and cares to God. I trust that they have been persuaded by it to do so. Some of my young readers, however, probably wish to know what became of the passengers in the packet-ship whom we left in such imminent danger; for that narrative is substantially true, though I was not myself an eye-witness of the scene. When we left them, they were tossing about upon the waves; the storm was increasing, the

The storm subsides.

Safe arrival at Provincetown.

captain had almost given them over for lost, and those of the passengers who were not prepared to die were greatly agitated by remorse and terror. Things continued in this state for some hours, and very few of those on board expected to see another morning. The passengers however, before long, perceived that the violence of the tempest was a little abating; the thunder of the wind and waves grew somewhat less; and though the pitching and tossing of the ship rather increased than diminished, they began to cherish a little hope; some of the number even fell into a troubled sleep.

At last there were indications of the morning. The dim forms of objects in the cabin began to be a little more distinct. The gray light of day looked down through the narrow window of the deck. As the passengers aroused themselves, one after another, and looked forth from their berths, they perceived at once that the danger was over. They went to the deck, clinging to something firm for support, for the wind was still brisk, and the sea still heaved and tumbled in great commotion. But the danger was over. The sky was clear. A broad zone of light extended itself in the east, indicating the approaching sun: and not many miles distant there was extended a level sandy shore lined with dwellings, and opening to a small harbor, filled with vessels which had sought shelter there from the fury of the storm. It was Provincetown, at the extremity of the Cape. I need not say that the passengers and crew assembled once more, before they landed, at the throne of grace, to give thanks to God for having heard their prayer and granted them protection.

Neglecting duty.

CHAPTER IV.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGLECTING DUTY.

“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”

I HAVE now, in the several chapters which the reader has already had the opportunity of perusing, endeavored clearly to explain the first steps to be taken in Christian duty, and the principles and feelings by which we ought to be guided in taking them, and I think that all who have read these pages must have understood clearly and distinctly what they have to do. Take for example the subject of the first chapter—Confession. You can not read, or even think upon that subject for half an hour, without seeing plainly that you have disobeyed God again and again, and that you have, by thus doing what you know to be wrong, destroyed your peace of mind, and displeased your Maker. This no one can deny. There is a vast variety of religious opinion and religious controversy in the world, but I believe no sect, believing in the existence of a Deity, was ever heard of, which maintained that man does not do wrong, or that doing wrong, he is not bound penitently to confess his sins to God.

But when you saw clearly that you had done wrong, and destroyed your peace, did *you go and seek this reconciliation?* How many probably read that chapter, and distinctly understood what duty it urged upon them, and saw the reasonableness of that duty, and yet shut the book and laid it away, without ever intending at all to set resolutely about doing it.

Injury which this book will do.

To understand clearly what duty is, and to have a disposition to do it, are very different things.

I have during the preceding chapters been explaining what the duty of my readers is. I have said scarcely any thing to persuade you to do it, and as I have gone on from page to page, and endeavored so to explain and illustrate the principles of piety that every one could clearly understand, the melancholy reflection has often forced itself upon me, "How many now will read or hear read these things, and yet entirely neglect to do any thing I describe." "Melancholy reflection!" you will say, perhaps, "why do you call it a *melancholy* reflection? If *some* are induced to do their duty in consequence of your explanations, you may rejoice in the good which is done, and not think at all of those who disregard what you say. The book will certainly do them no harm."

Will do them no harm? I wish that could be true. But it can not be. The religious teacher can not console himself with the thought that when his efforts do no good, they will do no harm. For he must, if he speaks distinctly, and brings fairly forward a subject of duty, cause every one of his readers to decide *for* it or *against* it; and when a person *decides against duty*, is he not injured? Is not good principle defeated or weakened, and his heart hardened against a future appeal?

The chapter on Confession of Sin, for example, will have been undoubtedly read by multitudes who will shut the book, and lay it aside, without at all attempting to perform the duty there pointed out. The duty was plainly brought before them. They could not, and probably would not, deny its obligation. But instead of going accordingly to God, and seeking peace and reconciliation to him by a free confession of guilt,—they laid the book away, and after a very short time all the serious thoughts which it suggested vanished

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| The disobedient child. | The message disregarded. | The Christian message. |
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from their minds, and they returned as before to their sins. Now this is *deciding once more, distinctly against God.*

For, to decide against God, it is not necessary to use the actual language of disobedience. Suppose that a father sends a child to call back his little sister, who is going away contrary to the parent's wishes. The boy runs and overtakes her, and delivers his message. The child stops a moment, and listens to the command that she should return immediately to her home. She hesitates—thinks of her father and of her duty to obey him, and then looks over the green fields through which she was walking, and longs to enjoy the forbidden pleasure. There is a momentary struggle in her heart, and then she turns away, and walks boldly and carelessly on. The messenger returns slowly and sadly home.

But why does he return sadly? He has done his duty in delivering the message. Why should he be sad? He is sad to think of the *double guilt* which his sister has incurred. He thinks that the occasion which his coming up to her presented, *might have been* the means of her return, and of her forgiveness, but that it *was* the means of confirming her in disobedience, and of hardening her heart against the claims of her father.

It is just so with the messages which a Christian teacher brings to those who listen to his words. If they do not listen to obey, they listen to reject and disobey, and every refusal to do duty hardens the heart in sin. There can be no question, therefore, that such a book as this must, in many cases, be the innocent means of fixing human souls in their sins, as the Gospel itself, while it is a savor of life unto life to some, to others is a savor of death unto death.

Reader, is your name on the sad catalogue of those who read religious books, and listen to religious instruction, merely to bring the question of duty again and again before your minds, only to decide that you will not do it? If it is, read

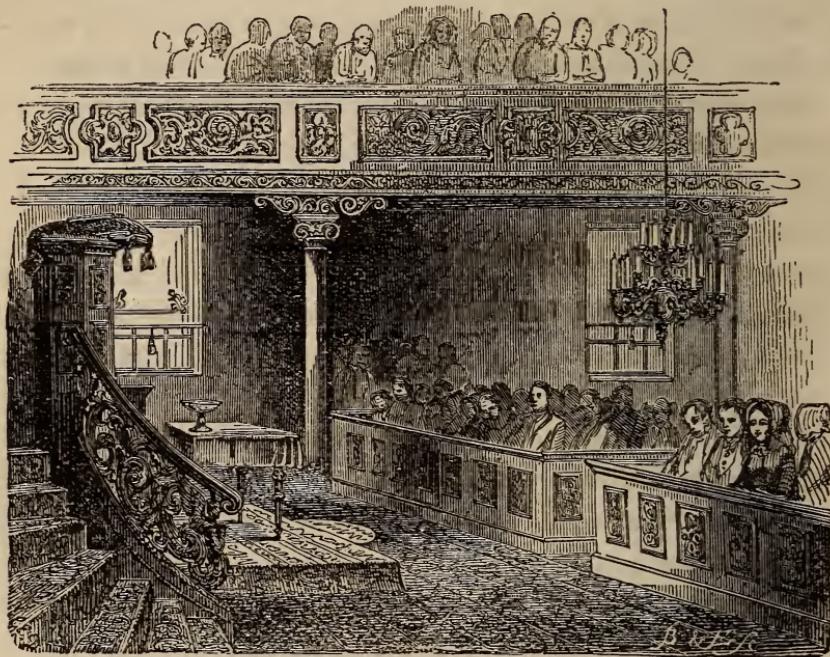
Story of Louisa.

Her character.

and consider attentively the narrative to which the remainder of this chapter is devoted.* It is strictly true, and is only a plain, common instance, such as are occurring all around us by tens of thousands, of the consequences of being *almost persuaded* to be a Christian.

THE STORY OF LOUISA.

Shortly after my settlement in the ministry, I observed in the congregation a young lady whose blooming countenance and cheerful air indicated perfect health and great buoyancy of spirits.



LOUISA.

Her appearance, as I saw her seated in her pew, led me at once to suppose that she was an amiable but thoughtless girl, and this opinion my subsequent acquaintance with her abun-

* By Rev. John S. C. Abbot.

*The evening meeting.**Louisa's interest in religion.*

dantly confirmed. There was no one of my charge whose prospects for long life were more promising than her own, and perhaps no one who looked forward to the future with more pleasing hopes of enjoyment. To her eye the world seemed bright. She often said that she wished to enjoy more of it before she became a Christian.

Louisa, for by that name I shall call her, manifested no particular hostility to religion, but wished to live a gay and merry life till just before her death, and then to become pious and die happy. She was constant in her attendance at church, and while others seemed moved by the exhibition of the Savior's love, she seemed entirely unaffected. Upon whatever subject I preached, her countenance retained the same marks of indifference and unconcern. The same easy smile played upon her features, whether sin or death, or heaven or hell, was the theme of discourse. One evening I invited a few of the young ladies of my society to meet at my house. She came with her companions. I had sought the interview with them, that I might more directly urge upon them the importance of religion. All in the room were affected—and she, though evidently moved, endeavored to conceal her feelings.

The interest in this great subject manifested by those present was such, that I informed them that I would meet, in a week from that time, any who wished to come, for personal conversation. The appointed evening arrived, and I was delighted at seeing Louisa, in company with two or three others, enter my house.

I conversed with each one individually. They generally, with much frankness, expressed their state of feeling. Most of them expressed much solicitude respecting their eternal interests. Louisa appeared different from all the rest. She was anxious, and unable to conceal her anxiety, and yet ashamed to have it known. She had come to converse with

Conversation with Louisa.

me upon the subject of religion, and yet was making an evident effort to appear unconcerned. I had long felt interested in Louisa, and was glad of this opportunity to converse with her.

“Louisa,” said I, “I am happy to see you here this evening, and particularly so, as you have come interested in the subject of religion.”

She made no reply.

“Have you been long thinking upon this subject, Louisa?”

“I always thought the subject important, sir, but have not attended to it as I suppose I ought to do.”

“Do you *now* feel the subject to be more important than you have previously?”

“I don’t know, sir; I think I wish to be a Christian.”

“Do you *feel* that you are a sinner, Louisa?”

“I *know* that I am a sinner, but I suppose that I do not feel it much.”

“I suppose you do not; but consider, Louisa, how ungrateful and insensible the heart must be, not to feel its sins against God. God has made you, and he is now taking care of you, giving you every blessing and every enjoyment that you have, and yet you have lived many years without gratitude to him, and have been continually breaking his commandments, and now do not *feel* that you are a sinner. What would you think of a child whose kind and affectionate parents had done every thing in their power to make her happy, and who should yet not feel that she had done any thing wrong, though she had been every day disobeying her parents, and had never expressed any gratitude for their kindness? You, Louisa, would abhor such a child. And yet this is the way in which you have been treating your Heavenly Father. And he has heard you say this evening, that you do not feel that you have done wrong, and he sees your heart and knows how unfeeling it is. You *know* that

Increasing interest.

Unwilling to yield to God.

you must be lost, unless you repent of your sins and ask humbly and earnestly for forgiveness. And why will you not do it? You know that Christ has died to atone for sin, and that God will forgive you for his Son's sake, if you are penitent."

To this Louisa made no reply. She did not seem displeased, neither did she appear subdued.

After addressing a few general remarks to my young friends, we kneeled in prayer, and the interview closed. Another meeting was appointed on the same evening of the succeeding week. Louisa again made her appearance with the same young ladies and a few others. She appeared much more deeply impressed. Her coldness and reserve had given place to a frank expression of interest and exhibition of feeling.

"Well, Louisa," said I, as in turn I commenced conversing with her, "I was almost afraid that I should not see you here this evening."

"I feel, sir," said she, "that it is time for me to attend to the salvation of my soul. I have neglected it too long."

"Do you now *feel* that you are a sinner, Louisa?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"Do you think, Louisa, that you have any claim upon God to forgive you?"

"No, sir. It would be just in God to leave me to perish. I think that I wish to repent, but I can not. I want to love God, but do not know how I can."

"Do you remember, Louisa, that Christ has said, 'Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple?'"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, Louisa, now count the cost; are you ready to give up all for Christ? Are you ready to turn from your gay companions, and lay aside your frivolous pleasures and

Her sickness.

She sends for her pastor.

acknowledge the Savior publicly, and be derided, as perhaps you will be, by your former friends, and live a life of prayer and of effort to do good?"

She hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "I am afraid not."

"Well, Louisa, the terms of acceptance with God are plain, and there is no altering them. You can not serve God and mammon. If you would be a Christian, you must renounce all sin, and with a broken heart surrender yourself entirely to the Savior."

The evening's interview closed as before, and a similar appointment was made for the next week. Some of the young ladies present, I had reason to believe, had accepted the terms of salvation. The next week about the same number were present, but Louisa was not with them; a slight cold had detained her. But the week after, she again appeared. To my great disappointment I found her interest diminishing. Though not exhibiting that cold reserve which she at first manifested, she seemed far less anxious than at our last interview: the Spirit was grieved away. This was the last time that she called to see me; but, alas! I was soon called to see her under circumstances which at that time were but little anticipated. These social meetings continued for some time, and many of Louisa's associates, I have cause to hope, became the disciples of Jesus.

Two or three months passed away, and my various duties so far engrossed my mind, that my particular interest in Louisa's spiritual welfare had given place to other solicitudes; when one day as I was riding out, making parochial visits, one of my parishioners informed me that she was quite unwell, and desired to see me. In a few moments I was in her sick chamber. She had taken a violent cold, and it had settled into a fever. She was lying in her bed, her cheek glowing with the feverish hue, and her lips parched with

Her alarm.Her increasing anxiety.

thirst. She seemed agitated when I entered the room, and the moment I stood by her bedside and inquired how she did, she covered her face with both hands and burst into a flood of tears.

Her sister, who was by her bedside, immediately turned to me and said, "Sir, she is in great distress of mind. Mental agony has kept her awake nearly all night. She has wanted very much to see you, that you might converse with her."

I was fearful that the agitation of her feelings might seriously injure her health, and did all that I could to soothe and quiet her.

"But, sir," said Louisa, "I am sick, and may die; I know that I am not a Christian, and O if I die in this state of mind, what will become of me? What will become of me?" and she again burst into tears.

What could I say? Every word that she said was true. Her eyes were opened to her danger. There was cause for alarm. Sickness was upon her. Delirium might soon ensue; death might be very near; and her soul was unprepared to appear before God. She saw it all; she *felt* it all. Fever was burning in her veins. But she forgot her pain, in view of the terrors of the approaching judgment.

I told her that the Lord was good, and that his tender mercies were over all his works; that He was more ready to forgive than we to ask forgiveness.

"But, sir," said she, "I have known my duty long, and have not done it. I have been ashamed of the Savior, and grieved away the Spirit; and now I am upon a sick bed, and perhaps must die. O, if I were but a Christian, I should be willing to die."

I told her of the Savior's love. I pointed to many of God's precious promises to the penitent. I endeavored to induce her to resign her soul calmly to the Savior. But all was

Death-bed repentance.

Increasing sickness, and mental suffering.

unavailing. Trembling and agitated she was looking forward to the dark future. The Spirit of the Lord had opened her eyes, and through her own reflections had led her into this state of alarm. I knelt by her bedside and fervently prayed that the Holy Spirit would guide her to the truth, and that the Savior would speak peace to her troubled soul. O could they, who are postponing repentance to a sick bed, have witnessed the suffering of this once merry girl, they would shudder at the thought of trusting to a dying hour. How poor a time to prepare to meet God, when the mind is enfeebled, when the body is restless or racked with pain, and when mental agitation frustrates the skill of the physician. Yet so it is. One half of the world is postponing repentance to a dying bed. And when sickness comes, the very thought of being unprepared hurries the miserable victim to the grave.

The next day I called again to see Louisa. Her fever was still raging, and its fires were fanned by mental suffering. Poor girl! thought I, as the first glance of her countenance showed the strong lineaments of despair. I needed not to ask how she felt. Her countenance told her feelings. And I knew that while her mind was in this state, restoration to health was out of the question.

“And can you not, Louisa,” said I, “trust your soul with the Savior who died for you? He has said, ‘Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’”

“O, sir, I know the Savior is merciful, but somehow or other I can not go to him; I know not why—O, I am miserable indeed.”

“Do you think, Louisa, that you are penitent for sin? If you are, you are forgiven; for God who gave his Son to die for us, is more ready to pardon than we to ask forgiveness. He is more ready to give good gifts to the penitent than any earthly parent to give bread to his hungry child.”

Louisa's despair.

The morning visit.

I then opened the Bible at the 15th chapter of Luke, and read the parable of the prodigal son. I particularly directed her attention to the 20th verse: "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck and kissed him."

"O, sir," said she, "none of these promises are for me. I find no peace to my troubled spirit. I have long been sinning against God, and now he is summoning me to render up my account, and O! what an account have I to render! The doctor gives me medicine, but I feel that it does no good, for I can think of nothing but my poor soul. Even if I were perfectly well, I could hardly endure the view which God has given me of my sins. If they were forgiven, how happy should I be! but now—O!"—her voice was stopped by a fit of shuddering, which agitated those around her with the fear that she might be dying. Soon, however, her nerves were more quiet, and I kneeled to commend her spirit to the Lord.

As I rode home, her despairing countenance was unceasingly before me. Her lamentations, her mournful groans, were continually crying in my ears. As I kneeled with my family at evening prayer, I bore Louisa upon my heart to the throne of grace. All night I was restless upon my pillow, dreaming of unavailing efforts at this sick bed.

Another morning came. As I knocked at the door of her dwelling, I felt a most painful solicitude as to the answer I might receive.

"How is Louisa this morning?" said I to the person who opened the door.

"She is fast failing, sir, and the doctor thinks she can not recover. We have just sent for her friends to come and see her before she dies."

"Is her mind more composed than it has been?"

"O no, sir. She has had a dreadful night. She says that she is lost, and that there is no hope for her."

Her advice to her young friends.

Last visit.

I went into her chamber. Despair was pictured more deeply than ever upon her flushed and fevered countenance. I was surprised at the strength she still manifested as she tossed from side to side. Death was evidently drawing near. She knew it. She had lived without God, and felt that she was unprepared to appear before him. A few of her young friends were standing by her bedside. She warned them in the most affecting terms to prepare for death while in health. She told them of the mental agony she was then enduring, and of the heavier woes which were thickly scattered through that endless career which she was about to enter. All her conversation was interspersed with the most heart-rending exclamations of despair. She said she knew that God was ready to forgive the sincerely penitent, but that her sorrow was not sorrow for sin, but dread of its awful penalty.

I had already said all that I could to lead her to the Savior—but no Savior cast his love on this dying bed—no ray of peace cheered the departing soul. Youth and beauty were struggling with death; and the eye which but a few days before had sparkled with gayety, was now fixed in an expression of despair.

“By many a death-bed I had been,
And many a sinner’s parting seen,
But never aught like this.”

There was nothing that could be said. The moanings of the sufferer mingled with the prayer, which was almost inarticulately uttered, from the emotions which the scene inspired.

Late in the afternoon I called again. But her reason was gone, and in restless agony she was grappling with death. Her friends were standing around her, but she did not recognize them. Every eye in the room was filled with tears, but poor Louisa saw not, and heeded not their weeping. It

Her sufferings.

She dies at midnight.

was a scene which neither pen nor pencil can portray. At the present moment, that chamber of death is as vividly present to my mind as it was when I looked upon it through irrepressible tears. I can now see the disorder of the dying bed—the restless form—the swollen veins—the hectic burning cheek—the eyes rolling wildly around the room—and the weeping friends. Who can describe such a scene? And who can imagine the emotions which one must feel who knew her history, and who knew that this delirium succeeded temporal, and perhaps preceded eternal despair. Louisa could no longer listen to my prayers; she could no longer receive the precious instructions of God's Word. And what could be said to console her friends? Nothing. "Be still, and know that I am God," was all that could be said. I could only look and listen with reverence, inwardly praying that the sad spectacle might not be lost upon any of us. At length, and in silence and sadness, I went away.

Early the next morning I called at the door to inquire for Louisa.

"She is dead, sir," was the reply to my question.

"At what time did she die?"

"About midnight, sir."

"Was her reason restored before her death?"

"It appeared partially to return a few moments before she breathed her last, but



"SHE IS DEAD, SIR."

Her feelings at last.

she was almost gone, and we could hardly understand what she said."

"Did she seem any more peaceful in her mind?"

"Her friends thought, sir, that she did express a willingness to depart, but she was so weak and so far gone that it was impossible for her to express her mind with any clearness."

This is all that can be said of the eternal prospects of one who "*wished to live a gay and merry life till just before death, and then to become pious and die happy.*"

Reader! "be wise to-day—'tis madness to defer."

CHAPTER V.

ALMOST A CHRISTIAN.

“Ye will not come unto me.”

THE melancholy story related in the last chapter is not an uncommon one. It is the story of thousands. All that is necessary, reader, to make the case your own, is that you should feel such a degree of interest in religious duty as to open your eyes clearly to its claims upon you, but yet not enough to induce you cordially to comply with them,—and then that death should approach you while you are thus unprepared. The gloomy forebodings and the dreadful remorse which darkened Louisa's last hours, must in such a case be yours.

It was not my intention, when forming the plan of this work, that it should present religious truth and duty in gloomy or melancholy aspects. Religion is a most cheerful and happy thing *to practice*, but a most sad and melancholy thing *to neglect*; and as undoubtedly some who read this book will read it only to understand their duty, without at all setting their hearts upon the performance of it, I ought to devote one or two chapters particularly to them. The case of Louisa, though it was a melancholy one, was *real*. And what has once occurred, may occur again. You will observe, too, that all the suffering which she manifested in her dying hour was the work of conscience. The minister did all that he could to *soothe* and *calm* her. Examine all

Neglecting duty when it is pointed out.

the conversation he had with her at her bedside, and you will find that it was the language of kind invitation.

Sometimes such a dying scene as this is the portion of an individual who has lived a life of open and unbridled wickedness. But, generally, continued impiety and vice lull the conscience into a slumber which it requires a stronger power than that of sickness or approaching death to awaken. Louisa was ALMOST A CHRISTIAN. She was nearly persuaded to begin a life of piety. In just such a state of mind, my reader, it is very probable you may be. Perhaps since you have been reading this book, you have been thinking more and more seriously of your Christian duty, and have felt a stronger and stronger intention of doing it, at least at some future time. You ought, after having read the first chapter, to have gone at once, and fully confessed all your sins to God. When you read the second, you should have cordially welcomed the Savior as your friend, and chosen him as your Redeemer and portion. You ought to have been induced by the third to begin immediately a life of prayer, and to have been constant and ardent at the throne of grace since you read it. But perhaps you neglected all this. You understand very clearly what Christian duty is. It is plain to you that there is a Being above with whom you ought to live in constant communion. You understand clearly how you are to begin your duty, if you have neglected it heretofore, by coming and confessing all your sins, and seeking forgiveness through Jesus Christ, who has died for you. Thus you know what duty is. The solitary difficulty is, that *you will not do it.*

But why? What can be the cause of that apparent infatuation which consists in continually neglecting a duty which you acknowledge to be a duty, and which you know it would increase your happiness to perform? Were I to ask you, it is very probable you would say what I have

known a great many others to say in your situation ; it would be this :

“ I know that I am a sinner against God, and I wish to repent and to be forgiven, and to love and serve my Maker, but *I do not see how I can repent.*”

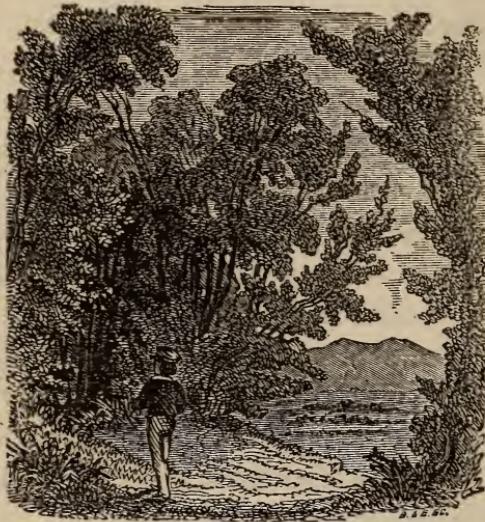
My reader, is this *your* state of mind ? Many persons do use this language, and use it honestly. That is, they use it honestly, if they mean by it what the language properly does mean, that they see the propriety, and duty, and happiness of a new life, so that in some sense they desire it, but that some secret cause, which they have not yet discovered, prevents their obedience. I design in this chapter to help you to discover what that cause is. If you really wish to discover and to remove it, you will read the chapter carefully, with a willingness to be convinced, and you will often pause to apply what is said, to your own case.

There are *three* very common causes which operate to prevent persons, who are *almost Christians*, from becoming so altogether.

I. *A spirit of procrastination.* Waiting for a more convenient season. The following case illustrates this part of our subject :

A boy of about twelve or fourteen years of age, a member of an academy, in which he is pursuing his studies preparatory to his admission to college, sees the duty of commencing a Christian life. He walks some evening at sunset alone over the green fields which surround the village in which he resides, and the stillness and beauty of the scene around him bring him to a serious and thoughtful frame of mind. God is speaking to him in the features of beauty and splendor in which the face of nature is decked. The glorious western sky reminds him of the hand which spread its glowing colors. He looks into the dark grove in the edge of which he is walking, and its expression of deep, un-

The student's evening walk.



THE WALK.

broken solitude, brings a feeling of calm solemnity over his soul. The declining sun,—the last faint whispers of the dying evening breeze,—the solitary and mournful note which comes to him from a lofty branch of some tall tree in the depth of the forest,—these and the thousand other circumstances of such a scene, speak to him most distinctly of the flight of time, and

of the approach of that evening when the sun of his life is to decline, and this world cease forever to be his home.

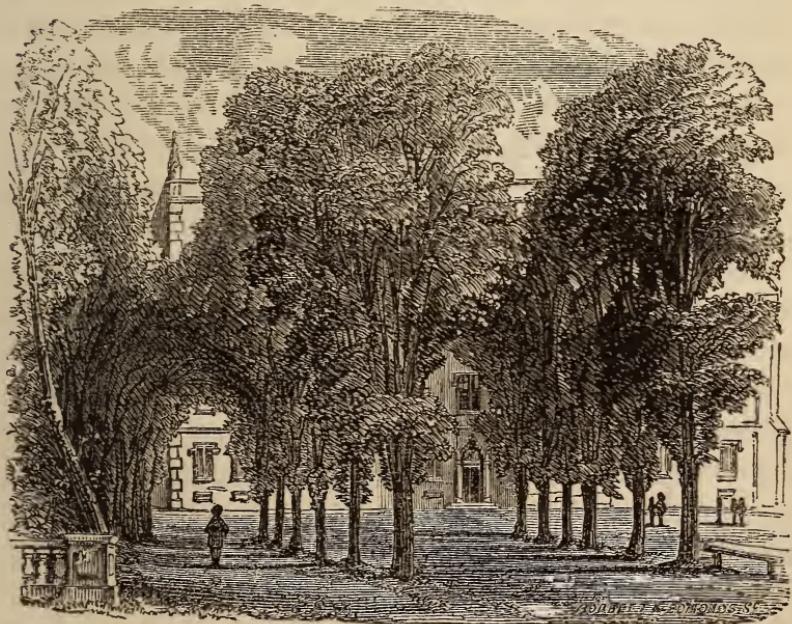
As he muses in this scene, he feels the necessity of a preparation for death, and as he walks slowly homeward, he is *almost* determined to come at once to the conclusion to commence immediately a life of piety. He reflects, however, upon the unpleasant publicity of such a change. He has many irreligious friends whom it is hard to relinquish, and he shrinks from forming new acquaintances in a place that he is so soon to leave. He reflects that he is soon to be transferred to college, and that *there* he can begin anew. He resolves that when he enters college walls, he will enter a Christian; that he will from the first be known as one determined to do his duty toward God. He will form no irreligious friendships, and then he will have none to sunder. He will fall into no irreligious practices, and then he will have none to abandon. He thinks he can thus avoid the

The admission to college.

The college walk.

awkwardness of a public change. He is ungenerous enough to wish to steal thus secretly into the kingdom of heaven, without humbling his pride by an open admission that he has been wrong. He waits for a *more convenient season*.

When he finds himself on college ground, however, his heart does not turn any more easily to his duties toward God than before. First, there is the feverish interest of the examination,—then the novelty of the public recitation-room,—the untried, unknown instructer,—the new room-mate,—and all the multiplied and varied excitements which are always to be found in college walls. There are new acquaintances to be formed, new countenances to speculate upon, and new characters to study, and in these and similar objects of occupation and interest, week after week, glides rapidly away. At last on Saturday evening, the last of the term, he is walk-



THE COLLEGE WALK.

ing over the college grounds, and among the other serious reflections that come upon his mind, there are the following :

“ One whole term has now passed, and what have become of all my resolutions to return to God ? How swiftly the weeks have glided away, and I have been going farther and farther away from God and from duty. I find that I can not in college, any more than in any other place, become a Christian without effort and self-denial. I *must come* boldly to the duty of giving up my heart to God, and commencing publicly a Christian life ; and whenever I do this, it must be hard at first. I will attend to the subject this vacation. I shall be quiet and retired at home, and shall have a favorable opportunity there to attend to my duty, and return to God. I will come back to college next term a new man.”

Such are his reflections. Instead of resolving to do his duty *now*, he looks forward again, notwithstanding his former disappointment, to another *more convenient season*. The bustle of the closing term, and the plans and preparations for the approaching vacation, soon engross his mind, and instead of coming to his Maker at once, and *going home* a Christian, he goes away as he is, in hopes to *return one*. Vain hope ! He will undoubtedly come back as he goes, procrastinating duty.

Term after term, and vacation after vacation pass away, and the work of preparing for another world is still postponed and neglected. The longer it is postponed, the worse it is, for the student is becoming more and more known as an irreligious young man, and more and more intimately connected with those whose influence is all against religion. He soon quiets conscience with the reflection, that while he is in one of the lower classes, he is much more under the control of public opinion than he will be at a later period ; others, older and more advanced than he, take the lead in forming the sentiments of the community, and it is harder for him to

act independently now, on a subject which affects his standing in the estimation of his companions, than it will be when he shall have passed on to a higher class, and shall have influence in forming a public sentiment to act upon others, instead of having others to form it for him.

The closing months of college life at last come on, bringing with them less and less disposition to do his duty. He has become familiarized to the idea of living without God. His long and intimate acquaintance with irreligious companions has bound him to them by ties which he is not willing to sunder. Not ties of affection; for there is seldom much confidence or love in such a case. They are ties of mere acquaintance,—mere community of sentiment and action. Yet he dreads to break away from what gives him little pleasure, and is thus bound by a mysterious and unreasonable, but almost hopeless slavery. He leaves college, either utterly confirmed in insensibility to religious truth, or else when he occasionally thinks of the subject, faintly hoping that in the bustle of future life some *more convenient season* may occur, which he may seize as a time for making his peace with God.

This is the history of many a college student, and by a slight change of the circumstances of the description, it might be made the history of thousands of others in every walk of life. The secret of this procrastination is this: The subject of it is deluded by the chimerical hope of finding some opportunity of coming to God *without real submission*,—some way of changing sides on a most momentous subject, without the mortification of changing,—of getting right without the humiliating acknowledgment of having been wrong. Now these difficulties, which constitute the straitness of the gate through which we must enter, *can not be avoided*. We can not go round them,—we can not climb up some other way, and it is useless to wait for some other way to offer. The work of coming directly and decidedly to our Maker, to

The accepted time.

Second cause.

Love of the world.

confess sin, and to ask his forgiveness, *must be done*. The public acknowledgment, that we have been wrong, which a public change of conduct implies, *must be made*, and it will be painful. Irreligious friends must, as intimates and associates, be abandoned ; and whenever that is done, it *will* require an effort. These steps must be taken, and the difficulty of taking them is *increased*, not diminished, by the lapse of time.

My reader, is not the reason why you can not repent of sin and love God this,—that you can never say, “I am willing to do it *now*?” Are you willing to be, from this time, the servant and follower of Jehovah, or are you trying the mad experiment of postponement and delay !

II. *Love of the World*. This is the second of those three secret obstacles to piety which I was to mention ; I mean secret obstacles in the way of those who think that they wish to be penitent, but that they can not be. I am not now considering the causes which are operating so extensively in chaining the great mass of mankind down in their bondage to sin ; I speak only of those who feel some interest in this subject, who think that they desire salvation, and are willing to do what God requires, *but can not*. Under this second head, I am to endeavor to show that many of my readers who are in this state of mind, are prevented from doing their duty by a secret *love of the world*. I shall not, however, succeed in showing this, unless you co-operate with me. If, while you read it, you put yourself in an attitude of defense, you can easily set aside what I have to say. I shall suppose, however, that you really wish to know, and that you will apply what I present, with impartiality and candor to yourselves.

In one sense, it is right to love the world. God has made it for our enjoyment, and filled it with sources of happiness, for the very purpose of having us enjoy them. We are to

Temptations.

Sacrifices necessary.

look upon it, therefore, as a scene in which the Creator intended that we should be happy, and we are to derive from it all the happiness that we can.

There are, however, temptations in this world, as all will admit; that is, pleasures which beckon us away from duty. When a young person begins to think of religious duty, these pleasures which have perhaps long been enjoyed, come up to view,—not very distinctly, but still with so much effect as to blind the mind, and harden the heart. Perhaps, my reader, you can think of some irreligious companion, whom you know you must give up, if you become an open and decided Christian. Even if you do not give up *him*, you expect that he will give up *you*, if such a change should take place in your character. Now although you do not distinctly make a comparison between the pleasures of his society on the one side, and the peace and happiness of religion on the other, and after balancing their claims, decide against God and duty,—although you make no formal decision like this, yet the image of that friend, and the recollection of the past pleasures of his society, and the prospect of future enjoyment, come into your mind, and secretly hold you a prisoner. The chain is wound around your heart, and its pressure is so gentle, that you scarcely perceive it. Still it holds you firmly, and until you loosen the link, it will hold you. You do right, while you are in this state of mind, to say that *you can not* love God. Our Savior says the same. “If any man come to me, and hate not,” that is, is not cordially willing to give up, if necessary, “his father, and mother, and wife, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he *can not* be my disciple.” You can not be the disciple of Christ, till you are willing to give up the world in all its forms.

Perhaps it is not a *friend* which keeps you from the Savior, but some other object. You may indulge yourself in some practice which conscience secretly condemns. Perhaps there

Third cause.

Fear of the world.

is a favorite amusement which you must give up if you should become a consistent Christian. You do not, perhaps, distinctly bring it up before your mind, into formal comparison with the hope of a happy immortality, and decide openly and knowingly in its favor. Its influence is more secret. It insinuates itself stealthily into your mind, and shuts all avenues against the light. You wonder that you do not see and feel, and can not discover the cause.

III. *Fear of the world.* Where *love* of the world binds one soul in sin, the *fear* of it, in some form or other, binds ten. Every one is surrounded by a circle of influence, it may be small or great, which is hostile to piety. To take the attitude of a humble Christian in the presence of this circle of acquaintances and friends, to abandon your past course of conduct with the acknowledgment that it has been entirely wrong, and to encounter the cold and forbidding, or perhaps scornful looks of those whom you have been accustomed to call your friends,—all this is trying. You shrink from it. You do not very distinctly take it into consideration, but it operates with an influence the more unmanageable, because it is unseen. My object in alluding to it here, therefore, is to bring it out to view, that you may distinctly see it, and bring fairly up the question whether you will submit to be deterred by such a consideration from doing your duty toward your Maker.

These three reasons are ordinarily the causes why those who are almost Christians, do not become so altogether. They are strong reasons. They hold a great many individuals in lasting bondage, and they will probably continue to hold many of my readers in their chains. It is no small thing, and with hearts and habits like ours, it is no *easy* thing to become a Christian. The inquiry is not unfrequently made, why the preaching of the Gospel in this world produces such partial effects, and surprise is expressed that

Difficulties foretold by the Savior.

Entire surrender required.

so few are found to comply with its reasonable claims, and to respect its awful sanctions. But when we look at those circumstances in the case which exhibit the greatness of the sacrifice which every man must make who really becomes a Christian in a world like this, we may rather be surprised that *so many* are found to come to the Savior, than that there are so few.

Jesus Christ foretold all these obstacles. He was very frank and open in all his statements. He never has intended to bring any one into unforeseen difficulties. He stated very plainly what he expected of his followers; he described the sacrifices which they must make to please him, and the troubles that they must endure; and when he left them at last, he told them plainly that if they should persevere in his service after he was gone, they must go on expecting to suffer, to bleed and to die in his cause.

“Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple.” How strong an expression! What an *entire surrender* of the individuals addressed does it require! And yet Christ says, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” How is this? Does not the first declaration imply that the service of Christ is a hard service? And does not the latter imply that it is easy? There are two classes of passages in the Scriptures which seem, on this point, to speak a different language. But the explanation is this: It is hard for you *to come* to Jesus Christ. Worldly pleasures beckon you away. Dangers and difficulties frown upon you, and above all the rest, pride,—pride, that most unconquerable of enemies, stands erect and sternly forbids you to take the attitude of a humble Christian. Now all these obstacles you must overcome. The world must be relinquished; the claims of even father and mother, if they interfere with duty to God, must give way; the trials which in a life of piety will await you, must be boldly encountered, and pride must

Real submission.

Changing sides.

yield. But when this is done—the surrender once made—all is happy; the yoke is easy, and the burden is light. If the heart is really submissive to God, if its own affections have indeed been crucified, and if God really reigns there, peace comes; and peace and happiness will really *reign*, unless returning pride and worldliness renew the struggle. The government of God in the soul is a government which regulates, but does not enslave; it diffuses over the heart unmixed peace and happiness.

Let all then distinctly understand that there is no becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ without *real submission*, and submission is no pleasant work for human nature to perform. It is hard for us to acknowledge that we have been wrong; to bow to a power which we have long opposed, and thus publicly and openly to change sides on a subject which divides the world. But it must be done. Enmity to God, or uncompromising submission to his will, is the only alternative.

It is right that this should be the only alternative. Just consider the facts. The Creator of all has proclaimed as the law of his empire, that all beings should love him supremely, and their fellows as themselves. We have always known that this was his law; we know too that it is reasonable in its nature, and most excellent in its tendency. No man can say that it is not exactly calculated to promote universal happiness; nor can any man deny that its almost unceasing violation here has filled the world with misery and crime. Now, excellent and reasonable as this law is, there are millions in the human family who have spent all their lives in the continued, unceasing violation of it. They know that they never have, *for a single moment*, loved God supremely, or loved their neighbors as themselves. All of us who are, or who have been in this state, have been plainly taking side *against God*, and against the *general happiness*. We have been violating known duty, continued in acknowledged sin;

Address to a young man.Good to be done.

and the effect has not been confined to ourselves ; the evil influence has diffused itself around us. Our example has been in favor of irreligion ; and as our sin has thus been public, can we complain that God should require our acknowledgment to be public too ? No ; submission to God must be entire, unqualified, unreserved, or we can not expect God to receive it.

But let me be more particular. Perhaps some *young man* who reads this, is almost persuaded to be a Christian. He is still an irreligious man. I do not mean that he is opposed to religion, but that he is without piety. Were I to address such an one individually, I would say to him, " You, sir, are probably to remain twenty or thirty years in the community of which you now form a part. These years will be in the very prime of your life. Your influence is now great ; it is increasing, and it must increase. God has brought you into this scene. Your original powers and your education you owe to him. The habits of industry and integrity which you have acquired, would not have been yours without his aid. He has held you up and brought you forward ; and now, as the opening prospects of usefulness and happiness lie before you, he wishes you to come to him and to assist in the execution of his plans for the promotion of human happiness. Will you come ? There will be a great deal of suffering which you can alleviate during the twenty years that are before you, if you will set your heart upon alleviating suffering. There will be much vice which your influence may prevent, if you will exert it aright. You may be the means too of bringing many an unhappy sinner to the Savior, if you will but come and love that Savior yourself, and seek to promote his cause." " But no," do you say ? " I have been, I acknowledge, in the wrong, but I can not bow to truth and duty, and humble pride, abandon my ground, and stand before the world the acknowledged victim of folly and sin."

The unchristian parent.

Submission hard.

The youth.

Then you can not serve God. Unless you will do this, you can not be Christ's disciple.

Is there an unchristian parent who reads these pages? God has especial claims upon you in your family circle. You are molding the hearts of these children by your influence, and the lineaments which your daily example is calling forth here are probably to last. You are doing work for a very long futurity. You endeavor to promote the happiness of your children for this life, but God wishes to make them happy forever, and he invites you to come and co-operate with him in the noble design. But you can not co-operate with him until you join him. If you have been against him thus far, you can not join him without submission. "But ah!" you say,—"that word submission! It is hard to submit." I know it is hard. For example, you have perhaps neglected family prayer. You can not be the friend of God and do your duty fully till it is begun. You can not join with him in promoting the eternal happiness of your son or your daughter, till you are willing to make up your mind to bow before your Maker at the fireside altar *for the first time*. And when you do it in a proper spirit, for the first time, you acknowledge the guilt of past neglect,—you take the attitude of a humbled, altered man. This is submission, and without it you can not enter the kingdom of heaven. God requires you to do this, but his sole motive for requiring it is, probably, that he may make you a happy fellow worker with him.

Look at that youth, the favored object in the circle of friends and companions in which he moves. His upright character has commanded respect, and his amiable disposition has secured affection. His companions seek his society—they observe and imitate his example—they catch and adopt his opinions. He has never, perhaps, said a word against religion. He complies respectfully with all its ex-

Submission necessary.

ternal observances, and in fine does all which he can do without being personally humbled. But how would he shrink from having it whispered about in the circle in which he moves, that he is anxious for the salvation of his soul ! How unwilling would he be that it should be known that he went to his pastor for personal religious instruction, or that he had taken any step which should admit before all men that he had been himself, personally, a guilty rebel against God, and that he wished to change sides now, and do good as openly and as publicly as he had before done injury ! But O ! reflect ; you have taken an open stand against God, and are you not willing to take an open stand in his favor ? I know it is painful—it is the very crucifixion of the flesh ; but God can not propose any other terms than that those who have been *open* enemies should become *open* friends, and no generous mind can ask any easier conditions.

Indeed sometimes it has appeared to me, that if another mode of entering the kingdom of heaven had been proposed, we should see, ourselves, its impropriety. Suppose the Savior were to say to a sinner thus : “ You have been my enemy, I know. In this controversy which has existed between God and his revolted subjects, you have taken the wrong side. You have been known to be without piety, and for many long years you have been exerting an influence against God, and against the happiness of the creation. But I am ready to forgive you, if you will return to me now. And as publicly giving up in such a controversy is always painful to the pride of the human heart, I will excuse you from this. You may come secretly and be my friend, to save you the mortification of publicly changing sides in a question on which your opinions and your conduct have so long been known.”

To this, a spirit of any nobleness or generosity would reply, “ If I have been in the wrong, I freely acknowledge that I

Why it is so difficult to become a Christian.

The jailer's submission.

have,—I choose openly to avow it. My recantation shall be known as extensively as my sin. I will not come and make my peace secretly with God, and leave my example to go on as it has done, alluring others to live in sin. If pride remonstrates, I will cut it down; and if my comrades deride me for the change, I will bear their reproaches. They can not injure me as much as my ungodly example and influence has injured them.”

Whether however the sinner sees the necessity of his being really humbled before he is forgiven, or not—God sees it—every holy being sees it; and Jehovah’s determination is fixed. We must submit, or we can not be pardoned.

Do you not now, my reader, see what is the reason why you can not be a Christian? You say you wish to repent, but can not, and in nine out of ten of such cases the difficulty is, you are not cordially willing *to give up all to God*. Pride is not yet humbled, or the world is not yet surrendered, and until it is, you can not expect peace. You know that you *have been wrong*—and you wish now to be right; but this can not be without an *open change*, and such an open change you shrink from. The jailer who came trembling to know what he must do to be saved, was told to repent and be baptized immediately. How humiliating! to appear the next morning as a spectacle to the whole community,—a stern public officer bowed down to submission through the influence of the *very prisoners* committed to his charge. Yet he was willing to encounter it. And you—if you can just consent *to yield*—to yield every thing—throw down every weapon, and give up every refuge, and come now to the Savior, bearing your cross—that is, bringing life and reputation, and all that you hold dear, and placing it at his supreme disposal, you *may depend* upon forgiveness and peace. But while your heart is full of reservations, while the world retains its hold and pride is unsubdued, and you are thus

unwilling openly and decidedly to take the right side, is it unjust or unkind in God to consider you as upon the wrong one?—Far be it from me to advocate ostentation in piety. The humble, retiring Christian, who communes with his own heart and with God, is in the best road to growth in grace, and to usefulness; but every one ought to be willing, and, if he is really penitent, *will* be willing, that the part he takes in this great question should be known.

I now dismiss this subject, not to resume it again in this volume. Knowing that there would undoubtedly be many among the readers of this book who can only be called *almost Christians*, I could not avoid devoting a chapter or two to them. I have now explained as distinctly as I have been able to do it, the submission of the heart which is necessary in becoming a Christian, and what are the difficulties in the way. I should evince but a slight knowledge of the human heart if I were not to expect that many who read this will still remain only *almost Christians*. I must here, however, take my final leave of them, and invite the others—those who are willing now cordially to take the Savior as their portion, to go on with me through the remaining chapters of the book, which I shall devote entirely to those who are *altogether Christians*.

CHAPTER VI.

DIFFICULTIES IN RELIGION.

“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.”

THE Young Christian, conscientiously desiring to know and to do his duty, is often, at the outset of his course, perplexed by a multitude of difficulties which are more or less directly connected with the subject of religion, and which *will* arise to his view. These difficulties in many cases *can not be removed*. The embarrassing perplexity, however, which arises from them, *always can be*, and it is to this subject that I wish to devote the present chapter. My plan will be in the first place, to endeavor thoroughly to convince all who read it, that difficulties must be expected—difficulties too which they can not entirely surmount ; and in the second place, to explain and illustrate the spirit with which such perplexities must be met.

It is characteristic of the human mind not to be willing to wait long in suspense, on any question produced to view. When any new question or new subject comes before us, we grasp hastily at the little information in regard to it which is within our immediate reach, and then hurry to a decision. We are not often willing to wait to consider whether the subject is fairly within the grasp of our powers, and whether all the facts which are important to a proper consideration of it are before us. We decide at once. It is not pleasant to be in suspense. Suspense implies ignorance, and to admit ignorance is humiliating.

Hence most persons have a settled belief upon almost every question which has been brought before them. In expressing their opinions they tell us what *they believe*, and what *they do not believe*; but very few people have a third class of questions which they acknowledge to be beyond their grasp, so that in regard to them they can neither believe nor disbelieve, but must remain in suspense. Now this is the secret of nine tenths of the difference of opinion, and of the sharp disputes, by which this world is made so noisy a scene. Men jump at conclusions before they distinctly understand the premises, and as each one sees only a part of what he ought to see before forming his opinion, it is not surprising that each should see a different part, and should consequently be led to different results. They then fall into a dispute, each presenting his own partial view, and shutting his eyes to that exhibited by his opponent.

Some of the mistakes which men thus fall into are melancholy; others only ludicrous. Some European traveler once exhibited a map of the world to a Chinese philosopher. The philosopher looked at it a few moments, and then turned with a proud and haughty look and said to the by-standers, "This map is entirely wrong; the English know nothing of geography. They have placed China out upon one side of the world, whereas it is, in fact, *exactly in the middle*."

Multitudes of amusing stories are related by travelers of the mistakes and misconceptions and false reasonings of semi-barbarous people, about the subjects of European science and philosophy. These savages go to reasoning at once, and fall into the grossest errors—but still they have much more confidence in their senseless speculations, than in any evidence which their minds are capable of receiving.

But you will perhaps ask me whether I mean to compare the reader of this book to such savages. Yes; the human

mind, *in its tendencies*, is everywhere the same. The truths which relate to the world of spirits are, to us, what European science is to a South Sea Islander. Our minds experience the same difficulty in grasping them, and we hurry to the same wild speculations and false conclusions.

It is not surprising that the truths contained in a revelation from heaven should be beyond our grasp. We can not even fairly grasp the truths relating to the mere physical motions of this earth. We know, for instance, that the distinction *downward* is only *toward the earth*. Now let your imagination extend half round the globe. Think of the people who are standing upon it, exactly opposite to ourselves, and attempt to realize that downward is toward the earth there. You believe it, I know; but can you, in the expressive phrase of children, *make it seem so?*

Again, you know, if you believe that the earth revolves, that the room you are in, revolves with it, and that consequently it was, six hours ago, in a position the reverse of what it now is,—so that the floor was in a direction corresponding to that of the walls now. Now can you, by any mental effort, *realize this?* Or will you acknowledge that even this simple astronomical subject is beyond your grasp?

Once more. Suppose the earth, and sun, and stars were all annihilated, and one small ball existed alone in space. You can imagine this state of things for a moment. Now there would be, as you well know, if you have the slightest astronomical knowledge, no *down* or *up* in such a case, for there would be no central body to attract. Now when you fancy this ball, thus floating in empty space, can you realize that there would be no tendency in it to move in one direction rather than another? You may believe, *on authority*, that it would not move, but fix your mind upon it for a moment, and then look off from it, first in one direction

Difficulties in religion to be expected.**Difficulties described.**

then in another, until you have looked in every direction, and can you make all these seem the same? No, we can not divest ourselves of the impression that one of these is more properly up, and the other more properly down, though the slightest astronomical knowledge will convince us that this impression is a mere delusion. Even this simple and unquestionable truth is beyond the grasp of the human mind, at least until after it has, by very long contemplation on such subjects, divested itself of the prejudices of the senses.

Is it surprising then, that when a revelation comes to us from a world which is entirely unseen and unknown, describing to us in some degree God's character and the principles of his government, there should be many things in it which we can not now understand? No. There are, and from the nature of the case must be, a thousand difficulties insuperable to us at present. Now if we do not cordially feel and admit this, we shall waste much time in needless perplexity. My object, in this chapter, is to convince all who read it, that they must expect to find difficulties—insuperable difficulties—in the various aspects of religious truth, and to persuade you to admit this, and to repose quietly in acknowledged ignorance, in those cases where the human mind can not know. The difficulties are never questions of practical duty, and sometimes are very remotely connected with any religious truth. Some of them I shall however describe, not with the design of explaining them, because I purposely collect such as I believe can not be explained satisfactorily to young persons, but with the design of bringing all cordially to feel that they must necessarily be ignorant, and that they may as well honestly acknowledge their ignorance, as vainly attempt to deny or to conceal it.

First difficulty. It is a common opinion that God existed before the creation of the world, alone and unemployed

First difficulty.

Attempt to avoid it.

from eternity. Now the difficulty is this: How could a being who was infinite in benevolence and power spend all that infinite period, in utter inaction, when it might have been employed in making millions and millions happy? The creation was not far from six thousand years ago, and a period of six thousand years, compared with the eternity beyond, is nothing. So that it follows that almost the whole of the existence of a benevolent and omnipotent Being, who delights in doing good and promoting happiness, has been spent in doing nothing.

Perhaps some one will make a feeble effort to escape from the difficulty by supposing, what is very probably true, that other worlds were created long before this. But let such an one consider, that however remote the first creation may have been, there is beyond it, so far as we can see, an eternity of solitude and inaction.

Remember I say, *so far as we can see*, for I am very far from really believing that the universe has ever been the lifeless void which such a speculation would infer to have once existed. I neither believe it nor disbelieve it. I know nothing about it; I can see and reason just far enough to perceive that the whole subject is beyond my grasp, and I leave it, contented not to know, and not to pretend to know any thing about it.

After reading these remarks at one time to an assembly of young persons, several of them gathered around me, and attempted to show that there was in fact no difficulty in this first case.

“Why,” said I, “what explanation have you?”

“I think,” was the reply, “that God might have been creating worlds from all eternity, and thus never have been unemployed.”

“If that had been the case,” replied I, “would or would not some one of these worlds have been eternal?”

Conversation.

Second difficulty.

“Yes, sir,” they all answered with one voice.

“Then you suppose that some of these worlds were eternal, and others not. The first which were created had no beginning; but after a time, according to this hypothesis, Jehovah began to create them at different periods. This is evidently absurd. Besides, those which were eternal, must have existed as long as God has existed; and if you admit that, it seems that you must admit that they are independent of God: for if they have existed forever, they could not have been created.”

One of the party attempted to avoid this conclusion, by saying, that though the *whole series* of creations has been eternal, yet that *every particular creation* may have been at some definite point of time; so that *each one world* has had but a limited existence, though the *whole series* has been eternal.

“But,” said I, “can you conceive—*clearly conceive*—of an eternal series of creations of matter, without believing that *some matter itself* is eternal? And if you suppose matter itself to be eternal, can you understand how God can have created that which has existed as long as he has existed himself?”

This was the substance of the conversation, which, however, in all its details, occupied half an hour. And I believe all who engaged in it cordially acknowledged that the whole subject was entirely beyond the grasp of their minds.

As this book may fall into the hands of some theological scholar, I beg that he will bear in mind, that I do not present this subject as one that would perplex him, but as one which must perplex the young. I maintain only, that whatever trained metaphysicians may understand, or fancy that they can understand, it is entirely beyond the reach of such minds as those for whom this book is intended.

Second difficulty. When in a still and cloudless summer

Extent of the creation.

A star, a great blazing sun.

evening, you have looked among the stars of the sky, you have often wondered at the almost boundless extent of the creation. That faint star which twinkles so feebly, that you almost fear that the next gentle breeze will extinguish it, or that the next light cloud will sweep it away, has burned with the same feeble but inextinguishable beam ever since the creation. The sun has blazed around the heavens—storms have agitated and wrecked the skies—the moon has waxed and waned over it; but it burns on the same. It may be obscured by some commotion of the elements for a time; but when cloud and storm have passed away, you will find it shining on unchanged, in the same place, and with the same brightness, and with precisely the same hue which it exhibited before the flood.

It is a great blazing sun, burning at its immense distance with inconceivable brightness and glory, probably surrounded by many worlds, whose millions of inhabitants are cheered by its rays. Now, as you all well know, every star which twinkles in the sky, and thousands of others, which the telescope alone brings to view, are probably thus surrounded by life, and intelligence, and happiness, in ten thousand forms. Stand now in a summer evening under the open sky, and with these views estimate as largely as you please, the extent of the creation. However widely you may in imagination expand its boundaries, still it seems to human reason, that it must have a limit. Now go with me in imagination to that limit. Let us take our station at the remotest star, and look upon the one side into the regions which God has filled with intelligence and happiness; and on the other side, into the far wider regions of gloomy darkness and solitude that lie beyond. Make the circle of the habitable universe as large as you will—how much more extensive, according to any ideas of space which we can form, must be the dreary waste beyond! The regions which God has filled by his efforts

Third difficulty.

Existence of suffering.

and plans, dwindle to a little fertile island in the midst of a boundless ocean. But why is this? Who can explain or understand how a Being, boundless in power, and desirous of promoting the greatest possible amount of enjoyment, can leave so immense a portion unoccupied, and confine all his efforts to a region which, though immense to our conceptions, is, after all, but a little spot,—a mere point, compared with the boundless expanse around?

Now, I by no means believe that there is such an immense void as such reasoning would seem to prove that there must be. My object is to show, that in subjects like these, which, from their very nature, are beyond our grasp, we may reason plausibly, and only plunge ourselves into difficulties without end. Therefore on such subjects I distrust all reasoning. I *never reason*, except for the purpose of showing how utterly the subject is beyond our grasp; and in regard to such questions, I have no opinion; I believe nothing, and disbelieve nothing.

Third difficulty. The existence of suffering. It seems to me that the human mind is utterly incapable of explaining how suffering can find its way into any world, which is under the control of a benevolent and an omnipotent God. If he is benevolent, he will desire to avoid all suffering; and if he is omnipotent, he will be able to do it. Now this reasoning seems to be a perfect moral demonstration; no person can reply to it. Some one may faintly say, that the suffering we witness, is the means of producing a higher general good and then I have only to ask,—But why could not an *omnipotent* Being secure the higher good *without the suffering*? And it is a question, which it seems to me, no man can answer. The only rational course which we can take, is to say, sincerely and cordially, we do not know. We are just commencing our existence, just beginning to think and to reason about our Creator's plans, and we must expect to find *hundreds* of subjects which we can not understand.

Fourth difficulty.

Existence of suffering.

The condemned pirate.

Fourth difficulty. Human accountability. Instead of calling this a difficulty, I ought to call it a cluster of difficulties; for unanswerable questions may be raised without end, out of this subject.

Look at yonder gloomy procession. In the cart there sits a man, who has been convicted of piracy and murder upon the high seas, and he is condemned to die. Now that man *was taught* from his youth to be a robber, and a murderer; he was trained up to blood; conscience did doubtless remonstrate; there was a law written on his heart which condemned him; but he was urged on by his companions, and perhaps by his *very father*, to stifle its voice. Had he been born, and brought up in a Christian land, by a kind Christian parent, and surrounded by the influences of the Bible, and the church, and the sabbath-school, he would *undoubtedly* never have committed the deed. Shall he then be executed for a crime which, had he been in our circumstances, he would not have committed; and which his very judge, perhaps, would have been guilty of, had he been exposed to the temptations which overwhelmed the prisoner?

In a multitude of books on metaphysics, the following train of reasoning is presented. The human mind, as it comes from the hand of the Creator, is endued with certain susceptibilities, to be affected by external objects. For instance, an *injury* awakens *resentment* in every mind. The heart is so constituted, that when the youngest child receives an injury which it can understand, a feeling of resentment comes up in his breast. It need not have been so. We might unquestionably have been so formed, that mere *compassion* for the guilt of the individual who had inflicted the injury, or a simple *desire to remove the suffering*, or any other feeling whatever, might rise. But God decided, when he formed our minds, that their tendencies should be as they are.

Moreover, he has not only decided upon the constitutional

Accountability.Foreknowledge.

tendencies of the mind, but he has arranged all the circumstances to which each individual is to be exposed ; and these, so far as we can see, constitute *the whole which affects the formation of character*—namely, the original tendencies of the soul, and the circumstances of life, by which they are developed, or restrained. God holds, therefore, in his own hands, the whole control, in the formation of the character of every individual.

This seems, at least to a great many minds, perfect demonstration ; there is no evading it ; and it brings us at once to that greatest of all questions in physics or metaphysics, in the whole circle of human inquiry—a question which has caused more disputes, destroyed more Christian peace of mind, given rise to more vain systems formed by philosophical attempts to evade the difficulty, than almost any other question whatever : *How can man be accountable, when God holds in his own hands such entire control in the formation of his character?*

I know that some among my readers will think that I make the difficulty greater than it is. They will think that they can see much to lighten it, and will perhaps deny some of my assumptions. Of such an one I would simply ask, were he before me—after having heard all he should have to say on the subject—“Can you, after all, honestly say that you understand, *clearly understand*, how man can be fully accountable, and yet his heart be as much under divine control as you suppose it is?” Every honest man will acknowledge that he is often, in his thoughts on this subject, lost in perplexity, and forced to admit the narrow limit of the human powers.

But again. No one denies that God *foreknows* perfectly every thing that happens. Now suppose a father were to say to his child, “My son, you are going to a scene of temptation to-day, you will be exposed to some injury, and will

Story of father and son.

be in danger of using some harsh and resentful words. Now I wish you to be careful. Bear injury patiently, and do not use opprobrious language in return."



THE FATHER'S COUNSELS.

All this would be very well ; but suppose that in addition the father were to say, "My son, I have contrived to ascertain *what you will say*, and I have written here upon this paper every word that you will utter to-day."

"Every word that *you think* I shall speak, you mean," says the boy.

"No," says the father, "every word that *you will* speak ; they are all written here exactly. I have by a certain mysterious means ascertained them, and here they are. And it is *absolutely certain* that you will speak every thing which is written here, and not a syllable beside."

Could any boy, after such a statement, go away believing

God foreknows all things.

Imaginary conversation with an infidel.

what his father had said, and yet feeling that he himself could be, notwithstanding, free to act and speak that day ~~as~~ he pleased ?*

Now God knows, as all will acknowledge, every thing which will take place in the history of one of his creatures, just as certainly as if a minute record of it were previously written. The mere fact of expressing it in language would make no difference. We may thus consider our future conduct to be as clearly known, and as certain, as if our histories were minutely written ; and where is the man—with perhaps the exception of a few theologians, who have made metaphysical philosophy a study for years—who will not acknowledge that this truth, which nobody will deny, throws a little perplexity over his mind when he looks at that boundless moral freedom and entire accountability, which the Bible and human consciousness both attribute to man.

Fifth difficulty. It is common to prove the existence of God from his works in the following manner: We see created objects ; they must have had a cause, for nothing can arise out of nothing. There must have been, therefore, some great first cause, which we call God.

Now this reasoning is very plausible ; but suppose the infidel to whom you present it should say, “But what brought God into existence ?”

* Let it be remembered that I am writing for *the young*, and am enumerating difficulties insuperable to *them*. A mind long accustomed to the accuracy of metaphysical inquiries will see that the antecedent certainty of any act proves only the greatness of the intellect which can foresee it,—it has nothing to do with the freedom of the moral agent by which it is performed. But if any one supposes that there is no great difficulty for *the young* in this subject, let him try to convince an intelligent boy, that, under such circumstances as are above described, he could be free to speak gently or angrily, solely according to his own free will.

Sixth difficulty.

Answering prayer.

You answer, "He is *uncaused*."

"Very well," he replies, "then he came from nothing; so that it seems something *can* come from nothing."

"No," you reply, "he existed from eternity."

"And *I* maintain," replies the Atheist, "that the *world* has existed uncaused from all eternity; and why is not my supposition as good as yours? There are no more marks of design in the structure of this earth, than there are in the nicely balanced and adjusted powers and attributes of Jehovah."

Now this does not shake my confidence in the being of a God. Notwithstanding the difficulty of reasoning with an infidel who is determined not to be convinced, the proofs from marks of design are conclusive to every unbiased mind. We *know* there is a God—every man knows there is; though they who are resolved to break his laws, sometimes vainly seek shelter in a denial of his existence: like the foolish child who, when at midnight the thunder-storm rages in the skies, buries his face in his pillow, and fancies that he finds protection from the forked lightning by just shutting his eyes to its glare. No; it only shakes my confidence in all abstract reasonings upon subjects which are beyond my grasp.

Sixth difficulty. How can God really answer prayer without in fact miraculously interrupting the course of nature? That God does answer prayer by an exertion of his power in cases to which human influence does not reach, seems evident from the following passage: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." James v. 16, 17, 18. Now if the

Case supposed.**The sick son.**

natural effect of prayer as an exercise of the heart were all, this illustration would be altogether inappropriate. It must teach that the prayers of men will *have an influence with Jehovah*, so that he shall order, differently from what he otherwise would do, events beyond human control. Now how can this in fact be done without a miracle? A miracle is nothing more than an interruption of the ordinary course of nature. Now if the ordinary course of nature would in any case bring us what we ask, it is plain we do not owe it to God's answering prayer. If the regular course of nature would not bring it, then it seems that God can not grant the request without interrupting that course more or less;—and this is a miracle. This reasoning appears simple enough, and it is difficult to see how the conclusion can be avoided.

But to make the point plainer, let me suppose a case. A mother, whose son is sick in a foreign port, asks for prayers in a seaman's chapel, that he may be restored to health and returned in safety. The young man is perhaps ten thousand miles from home. The prayer can have no power to put in operation any earthly cause which can reach him. If it reaches him at all, it must be through the medium of the Creator.

Now we are compelled to believe, if we believe the Bible, that the prayer will in all ordinary cases have an influence. The efficacy of prayer, in such cases as this, is so universally taught in the Bible, that we can not doubt it and yet retain that volume as our guide. But how can God answer this prayer without, in reality, interfering miraculously with the laws of nature? If the young man would have recovered without it, then his restoration can not very honestly be said to be in answer to prayer. If he recovers, when, without the prayer, he would have died, then it seems very plain that God must interfere *somewhere* to interrupt what would have been the ordinary course of nature; he must arrest super-

naturally the progress of the disease, or give to medicine an efficacy which, without his special interference, it would not have possessed ; or suggest to his physician a course of treatment which the ordinary laws of thought would not have presented to his mind, either of which, according to every philosophical definition of the word, is a miracle.

I might go on with such an enumeration to an indefinite length ; but I have, I hope, already brought up points enough ; and let my reader remember, that it is not necessary for my purpose, that he should admit that *all* these questions are beyond the grasp of his mind. It is enough for my present object, that each one will admit that *some* of them are. One reader will say, perhaps, that he can understand the subject of God's answering prayer ; another will think there is no difficulty in regard to God's foreknowledge of human actions ; and thus every reader will perhaps find some one of these difficulties which he thinks he understands. But will not all acknowledge, that there are among them, *some* which he can not understand ? If so, he will cordially feel that there are subjects connected with important religious truth, which are *beyond the grasp of the human mind*, and this conviction, is what I have been endeavoring to establish.

The real difficulties which I have brought to view in the preceding pages are few. They are only brought up again and again in different forms, that they might be more clearly seen. Eternal duration ; infinite space ; the nature of moral agency ;—these are the fountains of perplexity, from which, in various ways, I have drawn in this chapter. They are subjects which the human mind can not grasp, and they involve in difficulty every proposition, of which they form an element. You may remove the difficulty from one part of the ground to the other, you may conceal it by sophistry, you may obscure it by declamation ; but, after all that you have done, it will remain a difficulty still, and the acute and candid mind

Algebra.

The surd.

Distinction between theoretical and practical.

will see its true character through all the forms in which you may attempt to disguise it. The disputes, and the theorizing with which the theological world is filled on the subject of moral agency, for example,—the vain attempts to form some philosophical theory, which will explain the subject, are analogous to the labors of a school-boy, engaged in the impossible attempt to solve an algebraic equation, containing one *irrational term*. He transposes the troublesome surd from one side to the other,—he multiplies and divides it,—he adds to it, and subtracts from it,—he tries involution and evolution upon it; but, notwithstanding every metamorphosis, it remains a surd still; and though he may have lost sight of it himself, by throwing it into some complicated multinomial expression, the practiced mathematician will see, by a glance of the eye, that an insuperable difficulty is there.

So these great moral subjects contain intrinsic and insurmountable difficulties, which it is most philosophical to acknowledge, not to deny or conceal. We ought to be willing to remain in a measure ignorant on such subjects, if *we can only distinctly know our duty*. It is indeed best in ordinary cases, to look into the subject,—to examine it carefully, so as to find where the difficulty is, and see what firm ground we have all around it; and thus let the region of uncertainty and ignorance be circumscribed by a definite boundary. But when this is done, look calmly upon the surface of the deep, which you know you can not sound, and acknowledge the limit of your powers, with a humble and quiet spirit.

In order to avoid that mental anxiety which the contemplation of insurmountable difficulty is calculated to awaken, it is well to make a broad and constant distinction between a theoretical and a practical question. The inquiry *what duty is*, is in every case a practical question. The principles upon which that duty is required, form often a mere question of theory into which it is of no importance that

we should enter. Shall the Sabbath commence on Saturday evening, or on Sunday morning? This is a *practical* difficulty. Your decision of it will affect your practice at once. Why did God appoint one day in seven, rather than one in six, or one in eight, for holy time? That is just as plainly *theoretical*. Now almost every question relating to the reasons which influence the Creator in his dealings with men—every one in regard to the essence of his character, the constitution of man, as a moral being, the ground of his obligations to God, and the principles by which the magnitude and the duration of future punishments are fixed—these are all *theoretical* questions. If we believe the plain declarations of the Bible in regard to the *facts* on these subjects, those facts will indeed influence our conduct, but we may safely leave the theory to Him, upon whom rests the responsibility of ruling the worlds that he has made.

Take for instance the question of future punishment. There is a great deal of speculation on what *ought* and what *ought not* to be done at last with impenitent sinners who continue in sin during their period of probation. But what reasonable man, who will reflect a moment, can imagine that any human mind can take in such a view of God's administration as to enable it really to grasp this question? What power can comprehend so fully the nature and the consequences of sin and punishment,—not for a few years only, but *forever*; and not upon a few minds only, but upon the *universe*, as to be able to *form any opinion at all* in regard to the course which the Supreme ought to take in the punishment of sin? Why, the noisy, riotous tenants of a crowded jail-room are far more capable of discussing the principles of penal jurisprudence than we are of forming any opinion, upon abstract grounds, of the proper extent and duration of future punishment. The jailer would say to his prisoners, if they remonstrated with him on the severity of

The jailer and prisoners.

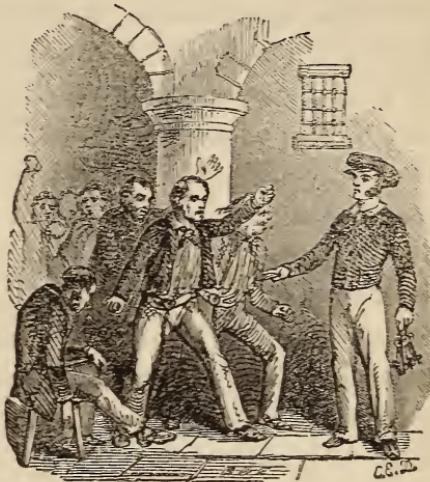
Scripture difficulties.

the sentence, “ The law decides this question ; we have nothing to do with it ; the law will be executed.” And so, if a man should attempt to reason with me, to prove, on abstract grounds, that *eternal* or that *limited* punishment is the just one ; might I not say to him, “ Sir, why do you perplex me with the question of the punishment of the enemies of God ? I have

not that punishment to assign. God says that the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment. He has decided. I can not stand on the eminence which he occupies, and see what led him to this decision. My only duty is to believe what he says, and to escape as swiftly as I can to the refuge from that storm.”

Nine tenths of the difficulties which beset the paths of young Christians would be avoided by such a spirit as this—by our taking God’s decisions as they stand, and spending our strength in performing the *practical duties* which arise from them,—leaving the grounds of those decisions wholly with him.

This principle may be applied in a multitude of cases in which Scripture declarations are a ground of doubt and difficulty to Christians. “ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” So far as



PRISONERS.

Comparative power of God and man in the human heart.

this text is considered in its practical aspects, how plain and simple it is; and yet how easy to lose ourselves in the theoretical speculations to which it may give rise. The *duties* it requires, are plain and simple. Make efforts yourself with patient fidelity, but feel at the same time a humble sense of your dependence upon God. The *theory* upon which these two duties are founded is lost in obscurity which the human mind can not penetrate.

The words "work out," &c., seem to imply that the power necessary to change the heart rests with man, while the latter part of the verse, "for it is God," &c., seems to attribute it to God. How is this? what degree of agency has man himself in the production of those holy feelings which the Bible represents as necessary to salvation, and what part devolves upon the Creator? This is a question which, as has been already remarked, has come up in a thousand forms. It has been the foundation of many a captious cavil, as well as of many an honest doubt. If the Bible had taught us that *man* alone had power over his conduct, so as to be entirely independent of an overruling hand, we could understand it. Or if it had maintained that *God* reigned in the human heart, and controlled its emotions and feelings to such an extent as to *free man from the responsibility*, this too would be plain. But it takes neither of these grounds. In some passages it plainly teaches us that all the responsibility of human conduct rests upon the individual being who exhibits it. In other places we are informed that the great God is supreme in the *moral* as in the *material* world, and that he turns the *hearts of men* as surely and as easily as the rivers of water are turned. And these two truths, so perplexing to philosophy, are brought, by a moral daring for which the Bible is remarkable, directly side by side in the passage before us. There is no softening of language to obscure the distinctness

Difficulty theoretical.

None in practice.

of the difficulty ; there are no terms of limitation to bring it in within narrow bounds ; there is no interpretation to explain, no qualifications to modify. But it stands fair and legible, and unalterable, upon the pages of the word of God, saying to us in language which we can not misunderstand—you must make active and earnest efforts yourselves in the pursuit of holiness—and you must still submit to the power that rules in your heart, and look for assistance to God, who works in you *to will* and *to do*.

It ought however to be said again and again, that the difficulty is not a practical, but a theoretical one. There is no difficulty in making the *efforts* required by the *former* part of the passage, and at the same time in feeling the *dependence* on God required in the *latter*. The difficulty is merely in understanding the principle upon which the two are founded. It seems to me that this is a very fundamental point. Persons seeking, or thinking that they are seeking to enter the kingdom of heaven, are often encumbered with these very difficulties. They can not understand the comparative influence which God and man have over the human heart, and hence they remain at a stand, not knowing what to do. They forget that the difficulty, great as it is, is one of *speculation*, not of action, and therefore they ought not to waste a thought upon it, until at least they have made peace with God. Two separate duties are required. We can understand them well enough—and they are not inconsistent with each other. *Exert yourself to the utmost in seeking salvation.* What difficulty is there in this? *Place all your hope of success in God.* What difficulty is there in this? And what difficulty is there in making exertions ourselves, and feeling reliance on God at the same time? There is none. It has been done a thousand times. Thousands are doing it now. It can be done by all. But we can not understand, it may be said, the principle upon which

Objects of this chapter.

1. Inquirers.

those two duties are enjoined. True, we can not understand it. The theory is involved in darkness, in which any who choose may easily lose themselves. But the duties are plain. God has enjoined them, and, as dutiful children, they ought to feel that if he clearly explains to us what we are *to do*, he may properly conceal in many cases the reasons of his requirements.

There are three or four very common evils, which, by taking up the subject of this chapter so formally, I have been wishing to remove. I will mention them.

1. *The useless perplexity of religious inquirers.* A young person, perhaps one of my readers, is almost persuaded to be a Christian. You reflect upon your lost condition as a sinner, and feel desolate and unhappy. You think of God's goodness to you, and are half inclined to come to him. Instead, however, of thinking only of your duty, and spending all your strength in resisting temptation, and in commencing a life of practical piety, you immediately seize upon some theoretical difficulty connected with theology, and trouble yourself about that. Perhaps you can not understand how God influences the human heart, or how man can be accountable if the Holy Spirit alone can sanctify the soul. "How can I work out my own salvation," you say, "if it is God who worketh in me to will and to do?" Or perhaps you perplex your head about the magnitude or duration of future punishment, or the number who will be saved, as though the administration of Jehovah's government would come upon your shoulders if you became a Christian, and you must therefore understand thoroughly its principles before you incur such a responsibility. How absurd! Can you not trust God to manage his own empire, at least until after you have come yourself fully over to his side?

Suppose a child were to show a disobedient and rebellious

Disobedient school-boy.

Present duty neglected.

spirit in school, and on being called upon by his teacher to reform, should, after pausing a moment, begin to say, "I ought to conduct differently, I know, and I think seriously of returning to my duty. But there are some things about it which I do not understand."

"What things?" says the teacher.

"Why," says the boy, "I do not see what I should do if you and my father were to command me to do opposite things. I do not clearly understand whom I ought to obey."

"Do you not know," replies the teacher, "that you now disobey me in cases where your father and myself both wish you to obey? Come and do your duty in these. You have nothing to do with such a question as you mention. Come and do your duty."

"But," says the boy, "there is another great difficulty, which I never could understand. Suppose my father or you should command me to do something wrong; then I should be bound to obey my father, and also bound not to do what is wrong. Now I can not understand what I ought to do in such a case."

Thus he goes on. Instead of returning immediately to the right path, becoming a dutiful son and a docile pupil at once in *the thousand plain cases* which are every day occurring, he looks every way in search of difficulties with which he hopes to perplex his teacher and excuse his neglect of duty.

Speculating inquirer, are you not doing the same thing? When it is most plainly your duty to love God, and to begin to serve him at once in the thousand plain instances which daily occur,—instead of doing this with all your heart, trusting in God that he will do right,—do you not search through the whole administration of his government for fancied difficulties, in order to make of them excuses for your neglect of duty? With these difficulties you embarrass yourself, and

2. Perplexities of Christians.

Way to avoid them.

strive to perplex your minister, or your Sabbath-school teacher, or your parent, and thus find a momentary respite from the reproaches of a wounded spirit by carrying the war away from your own conscience, which is the proper field, into your pastor's or your parent's intellect. While the argument is going on here, your sense of guilt subsides, conscience is seared, and you fall back to coldness and hardness of heart. Now why will you thus waste your time and your moral strength on questions in regard to which you have no responsibility, instead of walking in the plain path of duty, which lies open before you ?

2. *Useless perplexities of Christians.* In bringing up to view so plainly the insuperable difficulties connected with religious truth, I have been hoping to divert the minds of experienced Christians from being perplexed and embarrassed by them. Once make up your mind, fully and cordially, that there are depths which the sounding line of your intellect will not fathom, and you will repose in the conviction that you do not and can not now know, with a peace of mind which you can not in any other way secure. How many persons perplex themselves again and again, and go on perplexing themselves all through life, in fruitless endeavors to understand thoroughly the precise and exact relation which Jesus Christ bears to the Father. The Bible gives us, clearly, and in simple and definite language, all about the Savior which it is of practical importance for us to know. The Word *was God*, and the Word *became flesh*, or man. Now just be willing to stop here. "But no," says some one who loves his Savior, and wishes to understand his character, "I want to have clear ideas on this subject; I must know *precisely what relation he sustained to the Father* before he became man. Was he in all respects identical? or was he a different being, or a different person; and what is the difference between a person and a being? When he be-

Plausible reasoning sometimes unsafe.

Scholars in geometry.

came man, I wish to know precisely how the two natures came together."

You wish to know ; but how will you ascertain ? Does the Bible inform you ? It tells you that your Savior was God, and that he became man. If you rest upon the Bible, you must stop here. Will you trust to your own speculations ? Will you build up inferences upon what the Bible states ; and think that if you are cautious in your reasoning, you can be safe in your conclusions ? You can not be safe in your conclusions in such a case. No mind can be trusted for a moment to draw conclusions even from well-established premises, on a subject which it does not *fully grasp*.

If you doubt this, just make the following experiment. Undertake to teach the elements of geometry to a class of intelligent young people ; and as they go on from truth to truth, lead them into conversation, induce them to apply the active energies of their minds to the subject, in reasoning, themselves, from the truths which their text-book explains, and you will soon be convinced how far the human mind can be trusted in its inferences on a subject which is beyond its grasp. Your pupils will bring you apparent contradictions, arising, as they think they can show, from the truths established ; and will demonstrate, most satisfactorily to themselves, the most absurd propositions. In one case, an intelligent scholar in a class in college attempted to demonstrate the absurdity of the famous forty-seventh proposition. He drew his diagram, and wrote out his demonstration, and showed it to his class ; and it was long before any of them could detect the fallacy. The mathematical reader will understand this, and all may understand, that, in this case, the pupil made out a chain of reasoning perfectly satisfactory to his own mind, which however led to absurdity and falsehood.

You say, perhaps, " Well, this was because he had just

Drawing inferences.

Story of the knights and the statue.

commenced the study ; he knew scarcely any thing about it. Such mistakes would only be made by the merest beginners."

That is exactly what I wish you to say ; and to admit the same thing in regard to ourselves, as students of religious truth. We are *mere beginners* ; we know almost nothing of such subjects as God, eternity, and the constitution of mind. The moment therefore we leave the plain propositions of the Bible, which are all that are necessary for us to understand, and go to drawing inferences, we involve ourselves in absurdity and falsehood, no matter how directly and inevitably our inferences *seem* to follow. Whenever I hear a man attempting to prove, from the nature of the case, that the Word could not have been God, and afterward have become flesh, or that God can not reign in the heart, as the Bible declares that he does, and yet leave man free and accountable, I always think of the college sophomore endeavoring by his own blundering reason to upset the demonstration of Pythagoras.

These subjects, which are too difficult in their very nature for our powers, are the source of very many of the unhappy controversies which agitate the church. The mind is not capable of grasping fully the whole truth. Each side seizes a part, and, building its own inferences upon these partial premises, they soon find that their own opinions come into collision with those of their neighbors.

Moralists relate the following story, which very happily illustrates this species of controversy : In the days of knight-errantry, when individual adventurers rode about the world, seeking employment in their profession, which was that of the sword, two strong and warlike knights, coming from opposite directions, met each other at a place where a statue was erected. On the arm of the statue was a shield, one side of which was of iron, the other of brass, and as our two heroes reined up their steeds, the statue was upon the side

The shield of brass and iron.

One kind of controversy.

of the road between them, in such a manner that the shield presented its surface of brass to the one, and of iron to the other. They immediately fell into conversation in regard to the structure before them, when one, incidentally alluding to the *iron* shield, the other corrected him by remarking that it was of *brass*. The knight upon the iron side of course did not receive the correction : he maintained that he, himself, was right ; and, after carrying on the controversy for a short time by harsh language, the disputants gradually grew angry, and soon drew their swords. A long and furious combat ensued ; and when at last both were exhausted, unhorsed, and lying wounded upon the ground, they found that the whole cause of their trouble was, that they could not see both sides of a shield at a time.

Now religious truth is sometimes such a shield, *with various aspects*, and the human mind can not clearly see all at a time. Two Christian knights, clad in strong armor, come up to some such subject as moral agency, and view it from opposite stations. One looks at the power which man has over his heart, and, laying his foundation there, he builds up his theory upon that alone. Another looks upon the divine power in the human heart, and, laying his own separate foundation, builds up his theory. The human mind is incapable, in fact, of grasping the subject—of understanding how man can be free and accountable, and yet be so much under the control of God as the Bible represents. Our Christian soldiers, however, do not consider this. Each takes his own view, and carries it out so far as to interfere with that of the other. They converse about it—they talk more and more warmly—then a long controversy ensues, and if they have influence over others, their dispute agitates the church, and divides brethren from brethren. And why ? Why, just because our Creator has so formed us, that we can not, from one point of view, see both sides of the shield at the same

time. The combatants, after a long battle, are both unhorsed and wounded; their usefulness, and their Christian character, is injured or destroyed.

Now what is the true course for us to take in regard to such a subject? Simply this. Look at our dependence on God for a change of heart, and for the exercise of right feeling, just as the Bible presents this subject, and go cordially and fully, just as far as the Bible goes, which is a great way. Fix in your heart that feeling of dependence and humility, which this view is calculated to give. Then look at the other aspect of this subject, the active power of man, and go here, just as far as the Bible goes, and carefully learn the lesson of diligence which it teaches. Suppose you can not find where the two come together, be willing to remain ignorant of a theory which God has not revealed.

3. *Difficulties of children.* I have discussed this subject too with direct reference to children, for the sake of trying to guard you against two faults. One is, that of coming to your parents or teachers with questions, and expecting that they can in all cases give a satisfactory answer. They can not. They do not know. The wisest parent, the highest intellect, is incapable of answering the questions which the youngest child can ask in regard to the truths of Christianity. Do not expect it then. You may ask questions freely, but when the answers are not perfectly satisfactory to you, consider the subject as beyond the grasp of your present powers. Be satisfied, if you can understand the *principles of duty*, and spend your moral strength in endeavoring to be as faithful as possible there.

There is one other suggestion which I wish to make to you. When you carry questions or difficulties of any kind to your parents or teachers, be very careful to be actuated by a *sincere desire to learn*, instead of coming as young persons very often do, with a secret desire to display their own acute

4. Difficulties of parents and teachers.

The school-boy's question.

ness and discrimination, in seeing the difficulty. How often have young persons brought questions to me, when it has been perfectly evident that their whole object was not to be taught, but to show me their own shrewdness and dexterity. They listen in such cases to what I say, not to be taught by it, but to think what they can reply to it, and bring objection upon objection, with a spirit which refuses to be satisfied. Be careful to avoid this. Ask for the sake of learning. Listen with a predisposition to be satisfied with the answer, and never enter into argument, and take your side, and dispute with your parent or your teacher, with a view to show your dexterity. If you have this spirit, and exercise it, an intelligent parent will always detect it.

4. *Difficulties of parents and teachers.* This discussion is intended also as the means of helping parents and teachers, and older brothers and sisters, out of one of their most common difficulties—I mean, that of answering questions brought to them by the young. Learn to say, “I do not know.” If you really will learn to say this frankly and openly, it will help you out of a vast many troubles.

You are a Sabbath-school teacher, I will imagine. A bright-looking boy, whose vanity has been fanned, perhaps, by flattery, says to you before his class,

“There is one thing in the lesson that I do not understand. It says, God made the earth first, and afterward the sun. Now the sun stands still, and the earth and all the planets move round it. It seems to me, therefore, that he would have been more likely to have created the sun first, for that is the largest, and is in the middle,—and afterward the planets.”

As he says this, you see a half-smile of self-complacency upon his countenance, as he looks round upon his class-mates, to observe how they receive this astonishing display of youthful acumen. If now you attempt any explanation, he does

Pride in asking questions.

Humble spirit.

not follow you with any desire to have the difficulty removed. He either is absorbed in thinking how shrewdly he discovered and expressed the difficulty, or else, if he listens to your reply, it is to find something in it upon which he can hang a new question, or prolong the difficulty. He feels a sort of pride in not having his question easily answered. He can not be instructed, while in this state of mind.

“ What then would you say to a boy in such a case ? ” you will ask.

I would say this to him : “ I do not understand that very well myself. I know nothing about the creation but what that chapter tells me. You can think about it, and perhaps some explanation will occur to you. In the mean time it is not very necessary for us to know. It is not necessary for you to understand exactly how God made the world, in order to enable you to be a good boy next week.”

Thus universally, a humble, docile spirit will disarm every theoretical difficulty of its power to perplex us, or to disturb our peace.

CHAPTER VII.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

"God who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son."

THE first inquiry which meets us in entering upon the consideration of this subject is, "What sort of evidence of the truth of Christianity are we to expect?" The only proper answer is, that sort of evidence which men require to produce conviction, and to control the conduct in other cases. The human mind is so constituted, that men are governed by a certain kind and degree of evidence in all the concerns of life—a kind and a degree which is adapted to the circumstances in which we are placed here. This evidence, however, almost always falls very far short of *demonstration*, or *absolute certainty*. Still it is enough to control the conduct. By the influence of it a man will embark in the most momentous enterprises, and he is often induced by it to abandon his most favorite plans. Still it is very far short of demonstration, or absolute certainty. For example, a merchant receives in his counting-room a newspaper which marks the prices of some species of goods at a foreign port as very high. He immediately determines to purchase a quantity of the goods, and to send a cargo there; but suppose, as he is making arrangements for this purpose, his clerk should say to him, "Perhaps this information may not be correct. The correspondent of the editor may have made a false

The doubting clerk.

Skepticism.



SKEPTICISM.

slightest degree by such a skeptical spirit as this? Would he attempt to reply to these suppositions, and to show that the channel of communication between the distant port and his own counting-room *could not have been* broken in upon by fraud somewhere in its course, so as to bring a false statement to him? He could not show this. His only reply must be, if he should reply at all, "The evidence of this printed sheet is not perfect demonstration, but it is just such evidence in kind and degree as I act upon in all my business; and it is enough. Were I to pause with the spirit of your present objections, and refuse to act whenever such doubts as those you have presented might be entertained, I might close my business at once, and spend life in inaction. I could not, in one case in ten thousand, get the evidence which would satisfy such a spirit."

Again: you are a parent, I suppose; you have a son

statement for some fraudulent purpose, or the communication may have been forged; or some evil-minded person having the article in question for sale, may have contrived by stealth to alter the types, so as to cause the paper to make a false report, at least in some of the copies."

Now in such a case, would the merchant be influenced in the

The unexpected letter.

The sick child.

traveling at a distance from home, and you receive some day a letter from the post-office in a strange handwriting, and signed by a name that is entirely new, informing you that your son has been taken sick at one of the villages on his route, and that he is lying dangerously ill at the house of the writer, and has requested that his father might be informed of his condition and urged to come and see him before he dies.

Where now is the father who in such a case would say to himself, "Stop, this may be a deception; some one may have forged this letter to impose upon me. Before I take this journey I must write to some responsible man in that village to ascertain the facts."

No; instead of looking with suspicion upon the letter, scrutinizing it carefully to find marks of counterfeiting, he would not even read it a second time. As soon as he had caught a glimpse of its contents he would throw it hastily aside, and urging the arrangements for his departure to the utmost, he would hasten away, saying, "Let me go as soon as possible to my dying son."

I will state one more case, though perhaps it is so evident, upon a moment's reflection, that men do not wait for perfect certainty in the evidence upon which they act, that I have already stated too many.

Your child is sick, and as he lies tossing in a burning fever on his bed, the physician comes in to visit him. He looks for a few minutes at the patient, examines the symptoms, and then hastily writes an almost illegible prescription, whose irregular and abbreviated characters are entirely unintelligible to all but professional eyes. You give this prescription to a messenger—perhaps to some one whom you do not know—and he carries it to the apothecary, who, from the indiscriminate multitude of jars, and drawers, and boxes, filled with every powerful medi-

Men act from reasonable evidence.

cine, and corroding acid, and deadly poison, he selects a little here and a little there, with which, talking perhaps all the time to those around him, he compounds a remedy for your son. The messenger brings it to the sick chamber, and as he puts it into your hands, do you think of stopping to consider the possibility of a mistake? How easily might the physician, by substituting one barbarous Latin name for another, or by making one little character too few or too many, have so altered the ingredients, or the proportions of the mixture, as to convert that which was intended to be a remedy, to an active and fatal poison. How easily might the apothecary, by using the wrong weight, or mistaking one white powder for another precisely similar in appearance, or by giving your messenger the parcel intended for another customer, send you, not a remedy which would allay the fever and bring repose to the restless child, but an irritating stimulus, which should urge on to double fury the raging of the disease, or terminate it at once by sudden death.

How possible are these things, but who stops to consider them? How absurd would it be to consider them! You administer the remedy with unhesitating confidence, and in a few days the returning health of your child shows that it is wise for you to act, even in cases of life and death, on *reasonable evidence*, without waiting for the absolute certainty of moral demonstration.

Now this is exactly the case with the subject of the Christian religion. It comes purporting to be a message from Heaven, and it brings with it just such a kind of evidence as men act upon in all their other concerns. The evidence is abundant; at the same time, however, any one who dislikes the truths or the requirements of this Gospel, may easily, like the skeptical clerk in the case above mentioned, make objections and difficulties innumerable. A man

Evidences of Christianity, historical, internal, and experimental.

may be an infidel if he pleases. There is no such irresistible weight of argument that the mind is absolutely forced to admit it, as it is to believe that two and three make five. In regard to this latter truth, such is the nature of the human mind, that there is not, and there can not be an individual who can doubt it. In regard to Christianity, however, as with all other truths of a moral nature which regulate the moral conduct of mankind, there is no such irresistible evidence. The light is clear, if a man *is willing to see*; but it is not so vividly intense as to force itself through his eyelids, if he chooses to close them. Any one may walk in darkness if he will.

The evidences of Christianity are usually considered as of two kinds, *historical* and *internal*. There may properly be added a third, which I shall call *experimental*. These three kinds are entirely distinct in their nature.

1. If we look back upon the history of Christianity, we find it was introduced into the world under very remarkable circumstances. Miracles were performed, and future events foretold, in attestation of its divine origin, and the founder was restored to life after being crucified by his enemies. These, with the various circumstances connected with them, constitute the *historical* evidence of Christianity.

2. If now we examine the book itself, its truths, its doctrines, its spirit, we find that it is exactly such in its nature and tendency as we should expect a message from Jehovah to such beings as we, would be. This is the *internal* evidence.

3. And if we look upon *the effects which the Bible produces* all around us upon the guilt and misery of society, wherever it is faithfully and properly applied, we find it efficient for the purposes for which it was sent. It comes to cure the

Illustration.The phosphorus.

diseases of sin—and it *does cure* them. It is intended to lead men to abandon vice and crime, and to bring them to God—and it does bring them by hundreds and thousands. If we make the experiment with it, we find that it succeeds in accomplishing its objects. This we may call the *experimental evidence*.

These three kinds of evidence are so entirely distinct in their nature, that they apply to other subjects. You have a substance which you suppose is phosphorus. For what reason? Why, in the first place, a boy in whom you place confidence brought it to you from the chemist's, who said it was phosphorus. This is the *historical* evidence; it relates to the history of the article before it came into your possession. In the second place, you *examine* it, and it looks like phosphorus. Its color, consistence, and form all agree. This is *internal* evidence: it results from internal examination. In the third place, you *try it*. It burns with a most bright and vivid flame. This last may be called *experimental* evidence; and it ought to be noticed that this last is the best of the three. No matter what grounds of doubt and hesitation there may be in regard to the first and second kinds of evidence, if the article simply proves its properties on trial. If any one should say to you, "I have some reason to suspect that your messenger was not honest; he may have brought something else;" or "This does not look exactly like real phosphorus; it is too dark or too hard;" your reply would be, "Sir, there can be no possible doubt of it. Just see how it burns!"

Just so with the evidences of Christianity. It is interesting to look into the historical evidences proving that it is a revelation from Heaven, and to contemplate also the internal indications of its origin; but after all, the great evidence on which it is best for Christians, especially young Christians, to rely, for the divine authority of the Bible, is its present

Historical evidence.

The seal.

Miracles.

universal and irresistible power in changing character, and saving human souls from suffering and sin.

I. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

If the Creator should intend to send a communication of his will to his creatures, we might have supposed that he would, at the time of his making it, accompany the revelation with something or other which should be a proof that it really came from him. Monarchs have always had some way of authenticating their communications with their subjects, or with distant officers. This is the origin of the use of seals. The monarch at home possesses a seal of a peculiar character. When he sends any communication to a distance, he impresses this seal upon the wax connected with the parchment upon which the letter is written. This gives it authority. As no one else possesses such a seal, it is plain that no one can give the impression of it, and a seal of this kind is very difficult to be counterfeited. Various other devices have been resorted to by persons in authority to authenticate their communications.

In the same manner we must have expected that Jehovah, in sending a message to men, would have some way of convincing them that it really comes from him. There are so many bad men in the world who are willing to deceive mankind, that we could not possibly know, when a pretended revelation should come to us, whether it was really a revelation from heaven or a design of wicked men, unless God should set some marks upon it, or accompany it with some indications which bad men could not imitate.

The Christian revelation professes to have been thus authenticated by the power of working miracles and foretelling future events, possessed by those who brought the various messages which it contains. It is plain that man, without

Miracles.

Examining witnesses.

The court.

divine assistance, could have had no such power. If this power then really accompanied those who were the instruments of introducing the Christian religion into the world, we may safely conclude that it was given them by God, and as he would never confer such a power to sanction imposture, the message brought must be from him.

The way then to ascertain whether these miracles were actually performed, is like that of ascertaining all other matters of fact, by calling upon those who witnessed them for their testimony.

The manner in which these witnesses are to be examined, is similar to that pursued in ordinary courts of justice. It is similar, I mean, in its principles, not in its forms. I know of nothing which shows more convincingly the satisfactory nature of this evidence, than a comparison of it with that usually relied on in courts of justice. In order to exhibit the former then distinctly, I shall minutely describe the course pursued, and, to make my description more definite, I shall select a particular case.

I was once walking in the streets of a large city, in which I was a stranger, looking around for some striking exhibitions of human character or efforts, when I saw several persons, of apparently low rank in life, standing before the door of what seemed to be some public building. I thought it was probably a court-house, and that these were the men who had been called as witnesses, and that they were waiting for their turn to testify. As courts are always open to the public, I concluded to go in and hear some of the causes. I walked up the steps and entered a spacious hall, and at the foot of a flight of stairs saw a little painted sign, saying that the court-room was above. I passed up and pushed open the light baize door, which admitted me to the room itself.

At the end at which I entered there were two rows of seats, one row on each side of an aisle which led up through

The court-room.

the center. These seats seemed to be designed for spectators; for those on one side were nearly filled with women, and those on the other by men. I advanced up the aisle until I nearly reached the center of the room, and then took my seat among the spectators, where I could distinctly hear and see all that passed. Before me, at the farther end of the room, sat the judge, behind a sort of desk placed on an elevated platform, and in front of him was another desk, lower, which was occupied by the clerk, whose business it was to make a record of all the causes that were tried. There was an area in front of the judge, in which were seats for the various lawyers; and in boxes at the sides were seats for the jury, who were to hear the evidence, and decide what facts were proved. On one side of the room was a door made of iron grating, with sharp points upon the top, which led, I supposed, to an apartment where the prisoners were kept.



THE COURT.

The prisoner.

His accusation and trial.

Not long after I had taken my seat, the clerk said that the next cause was the trial of a prisoner for house-breaking. The judge commanded an officer to bring the accused into court. The officer went to the iron door which I have described, unlocked it, and brought out of the room into which it opened, a prisoner; he looked guilty and ashamed and his face was pale—though the paleness was apparently not that of fear, but such as is caused by the debility and disease resulting from a life of dissipation and vice. The officer brought him into the middle of the room, and placed him in a small inclosure near the center of the room, and shut him in. He leaned against the railing in front, looked at the judge, and began to listen to his trial.

The clerk read the accusation. It was, that he had broken open an unoccupied house once or twice, and taken from it articles belonging to the owner of the house. The judge asked him if he pleaded guilty or not guilty. He said, *not guilty*. The judge then asked the jury at the side to listen to the evidence, so that they might be prepared to decide whether this man did break open the house or not.

Men, not accustomed to speak in public assemblies, could not easily give their testimony in such a case, so that it would be fully understood on all the important points. In fact, very few know fully what the important points are. Hence it is proper that there should be lawyers present, who can ask questions, and thus examine the witnesses in such a manner as to bring out fully all the facts in the case. There is one lawyer appointed by the government, whose business it is to bring to view all the facts which indicate the prisoner's guilt; and another appointed by the prisoner, who takes care that nothing is omitted or lost sight of which tends to show his innocence. When the prisoner has not appointed any counsel, the judge appoints some one for him. This was done in the case before us

Testimony of the owner. Testimony of the watchman. Lawyer's question.

The first witness called was the owner of the house. It is necessary that each witness should be a man of good character, and that he should testify only to what he saw or heard. No one is permitted to tell what some one else told him ; for stories are very likely to be altered in repetition ; so that, even in a complicated case, each man goes only so far as *his own personal knowledge* extends. And, in order to be sure that the jury shall have his own story, he is obliged to come personally into court, and tell the story in presence of all. The owner of this house was probably a man of business ; and a great deal of valuable time would have been saved, if he had been permitted to write down his account, and send it in. But no ; every witness, where it is possible, must actually come into court, and present his evidence with his own voice. This remark it is important to remember, as the principle will come into view, when we consider the other case.

The witness testified, that he owned a certain house ; that he moved out of it, and locked it up, leaving some articles in an upper chamber ; that one day he went in, and found that the house had been entered, I believe by a window, and that the chamber-door had been broken open, and some of the articles taken away. He said that he then employed a watchman to sleep in the house, and to endeavor to catch the thief.

Here this witness was obliged to stop ; for, although he knew how the watchman succeeded, he was not permitted to state what he knew, for he did not *see* it. No man testifies except to what he has seen or heard.

The watchman was next called. The lawyer for the government asked him,

“ Were you employed by the owner of this house to watch for a thief in it ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

Watchman's story.

The prisoner convicted.

"What did he say to you, when he engaged you?"

"He told me that his house had been broken open, and he wished me to watch for the thief."

"Did you do it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, relate to the jury what occurred that night."

"I watched several nights. For some nights nothing occurred. All was quiet till morning."

"In what room did you stay?"

"In the room under the chamber from which the articles had been stolen."

"Well, go on with your account."

"At last, on the 15th of June, as I was then watching, about three o'clock in the morning I heard a noise. Some one was coming softly up stairs. He went up into the room over my head, and after remaining a few minutes there, he began to come down. I immediately went out into the entry, and seized him, and took him to the watch-house. The next morning he was put in prison."

The lawyer then pointed to the prisoner at the bar, and asked if that was the man. The witness said that it was.

The judge then asked the counsel for the prisoner, if he wished to ask any questions. He replied that he did, and he immediately proceeded to question the witnesses very minutely in respect to the whole transaction. He, however, elicited nothing favorable to the prisoner. The jury finally consulted together, and all agreed that the prisoner was proved guilty; and the judge ordered him to be sent back to the prison, till he should determine what punishment must be assigned.

This is substantially the way in which all trials are conducted. Three or four points are considered very necessary. 1. That the witnesses should be *of good character*. 2. That they should have actually *witnessed* what they describe.

Points secured on trial.

Three points to be attended to.

And, 3. That the precise account which they themselves give, should come into court. These points the judge or the lawyers secure. The latter they obtain by having the witness himself always come, if it is possible, even if he has to leave most important business for this purpose. If from sickness, or any other similar cause, he can not come, his testimony is, in some cases, taken down in writing, and signed by himself, and that paper, the very one which he signed, must be brought into court, and read there. This is called a deposition. The second point is secured by not allowing any man to go any farther in his testimony than he himself saw or heard. So that sometimes, when the case is complicated, a very large number of witnesses are called, before the whole case is presented to the jury. The first point they secure, by inquiring into the character of the witnesses. If any man can be proved to be unworthy of credit, his testimony is set aside.

Now all these points must be looked at in examining the evidence of the Christian miracles. I alter the arrangement of them, however, in the following discussion, placing them now in the order in which it is most convenient to consider them.

In examining the evidence relating to the Christian miracles then, we must ascertain,

1. That we have the actual account given by the original testifiers themselves.

2. That these testifiers were actual witnesses of the facts to which they give testimony,

3. That these witnesses are credible; that is, that they are honest men, and that their word can be relied upon.

These three points I shall examine in order, in reference to the Christian miracles. The witnesses are the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; and the first inquiry, according to the list above presented, is to determine whether we have exactly the account which they themselves give.

Witnesses are commonly called into court to tell their own story, and then there can be no mistake. If that is impossible, as I remarked above, their deposition is taken, with certain forms, and the very paper which they originally signed is brought and read in court. But neither of these courses can be taken here. For, in the first place, the witnesses have been for a long time dead, so that they can not come forward to give their testimony ; and although they wrote, at the time, a full account of the events which occurred, so long a period has since elapsed that none of the original manuscripts now remain. Time has long since destroyed all vestiges of the writings of those ancient days.

I presume that most of my readers are aware that not long after the time of our Savior, barbarians from the north, in innumerable hordes, began to pour down upon the Roman empire, until at last they subverted and destroyed it. Very many of these barbarians became nominal Christians, and preserved some copies of the Bible, and in fact, they saved many extensive and valuable libraries, consisting of course, of manuscript works, in the form generally of parchment rolls, the art of printing not being then known. They however subverted most of the institutions, and destroyed the accumulated property of civilized life, and brought a long period of ignorance and semi-barbarism, called the dark ages, upon the world. After some time, however, there began to appear in various parts of Europe signs of a gradual improvement. The monks in the various convents, having no other employment, began to explore the old libraries, and to study the books. They made themselves acquainted with the languages in which they were written, and when the art of printing was invented, they published them. In consequence, however, of the immense number of manuscripts collected in some of the libraries, a long time elapsed before they were fully explored, and even now the work is not absolutely completed. New

Old manuscripts.

Genuineness of the Scriptures.

writings are occasionally brought to light, and published, The difficulty of deciphering such old, worn-out, faded, and almost illegible parchment rolls, is very great.

A great deal of interest was felt at the very first by these explorers, to find the oldest copies of the Bible, or of any parts of the Bible. They wished to have the most accurate and authentic copy possible ; and the more ancient the copy, the more probable it was that it was taken directly from the original, and consequently the more it was to be depended upon. If they could have found a manuscript which was evidently the very copy originally written by the author himself, it would have been considered invaluable.

The number of manuscripts of the whole or of parts of the Hebrew Bible, thus found, and now preserved in various libraries of Europe, is more than four hundred ; and of the Greek Testament, not far from one hundred and fifty. They are scattered all over Europe, and are preserved in the libraries with great care. The oldest of them however was written several hundred years after the death of Christ, so that we now can not ever have the manuscripts actually written by the original witnesses. The two methods usually relied on therefore in courts of justice, for being sure that the actual story of the witness himself is presented in court, fail in this case. We must resort therefore to another method equally certain, but different in form.

The evidence relied upon to prove that the books we have now, or rather the ancient manuscripts in the libraries in Europe from which they are translated, are really the same with the accounts originally written by the witnesses themselves, is this : Immediately after they were written, a great many other Christian writers, very much interested in these accounts, began to quote them in their own letters and books. They quoted them much more copiously than it is customary to quote now, because the art of printing puts every import.

ant book within the reach of all who are interested in it. Then the original accounts existed only in manuscript, and consequently could be seen and read only by a few. These few therefore in their writings made frequent and copious extracts from them ; and these extracts have come down to us separately, and each one proves that the passage that it contains, which is in the account now, was in that account when the quotation was made.

An imaginary instance will make this plain. The Vatican manuscript, as it is called, that is, a very ancient manuscript preserved in the library of the Vatican at Rome, is supposed to have been written about four hundred years after Christ. It contains, we will suppose, John's Gospel, just as we have it now in our Bibles. This proves, that if the *real original account* which John gave was altered at all after he wrote it, it was altered before the time in which that manuscript was made. Now suppose a Christian at Antioch, living *two hundred years before the Vatican manuscript was written*, had been writing a book, and in it had mentioned John's Gospel, and had copied out a whole chapter. This book he leaves at Antioch : it is copied there again and again, and some copies are found there at the revival of learning after the dark ages. Here we have one chapter proved to have been in John's account *two hundred years earlier* than the date of the Vatican manuscript. In the same manner another chapter might have been quoted in another book kept at Alexandria, and others in other works, preserved in various other libraries. Now the fact is, that the quotations of this character which are found in ancient writings are so numerous and so extensive as to form an uninterrupted succession of evidences, beginning but a very short time after the original accounts were written, and coming down to modern times. Every chapter and verse of the original accounts are not indeed confirmed in this way,

Use made of quotations.Paley's evidences.

but every thing in the least degree important is. All the material facts, and every particular in regard to which there could be any necessity for this evidence, are furnished with it. Learned men have taken a great deal of pains to explore and collect this mass of evidence in favor of the genuineness of the sacred books. The quotations have been most carefully examined and republished ; so that all who are inclined to go into an examination of them can easily do so. Dr. Paley, in his evidences of Christianity, has presented enough to satisfy any mind of sufficient attainment to appreciate such an argument.

I say, of sufficient attainment, for it requires not a little. There are very few, excepting professed scholars, who can have time to go fully enough into an examination of this subject to form an independent judgment in respect to it. I have not attempted in the above remarks to present you with the argument itself, but only to explain the nature of it. As I remarked before, I do not think that the historical argument is calculated to come with so much force to the minds of Christians generally, as one of another kind, which I shall presently exhibit. All, however, may easily understand the nature of the ground on which it stands.

We may consider, then, the fact that these almost innumerable quotations from the writers of the New Testament, and translations from them, forming a series which commenced soon after the writings first appeared, and continuing in uninterrupted succession down to the present time, as abundant evidence that *the story which we now have*, is the *story originally given* by the witnesses themselves. This evidence does satisfy all who fully examine it. And this is the first point in the investigation.

But the question will arise in the minds of many of my readers, why is it necessary to prove so fully and formally such a point as this ? Why is it necessary to show so care-

Necessity for proving the genuineness of the Scriptures.

fully that these are precisely, in all important respects, the very accounts originally written by the witnesses themselves ? The answer is this. Unless this point were very carefully and fully proved, we might have supposed that the prevailing belief of the truth of the Christian miracles, and the general circulation of our present books, might have arisen in this way ; suppose that, eighteen hundred years ago, a good man, named Jesus Christ, had been dissatisfied with the prevailing errors and superstitions, and had taught a purer system of religious and moral duty than before prevailed. His followers become strongly attached to him. They repeat to one another his instructions, follow him from place to place, and soon attract the attention of the authorities of the country. Like Socrates, he is persecuted by his enemies, and put to death. After his death, his disciples make greater and greater efforts to promote his principles. They relate, with some exaggeration, the incidents of his life. His benevolence and kindness to the sick and to the afflicted is gradually, as the stories are repeated again and again, magnified to the exertion of miraculous power. One extraordinary narrative after another gradually gains credit and circulation. No one intends to deceive, but, according to the universal tendency in such cases, even where stories that strongly interest the feelings are circulated among good men, the accounts gradually and insensibly assume a marvelous and miraculous air, and after a time, when years have elapsed, and no method of ascertaining the truth remains, these exaggerated and false stories are committed to writing, and these writings come down to us. This supposition might very plausibly have been made. But the evidence afforded by the series of quotations I have described cuts it off altogether. That long and uninterrupted series carries us irresistibly back to the very time when the events occurred. There is no time left for exaggeration and misrepresentation. We prove that

The original records remain.

Second point.

the accounts which we now have were written on the spot—that they were in circulation, and exposed to rigid scrutiny at *the very time in which the events themselves took place*; and we are thus compelled to believe that the original records, made at the time, have been preserved unaltered to the present day.

“But does this,” you will ask, “prove that the accounts are *true*?” Most certainly not. We have not yet attempted to prove them *true*. We have not yet come to the examination of the *testimony itself* at all. The original witnesses, if we admit that these accounts were written by them, may have been mistaken, or they may have been false witnesses. We have said nothing yet on these points. The reader must bear in mind what is the precise point now up. It is simply to show that the accounts which we have now, whatever they may contain, are *the very accounts which the witnesses themselves wrote*. The depositions are properly authenticated; not, indeed, by the common legal forms—seal and signature and witness—but by abundant evidence—and evidence of exactly the kind which is always most relied on, and entirely relied on, in all other cases, where the examination of very ancient documents come up. This point being thus settled, we are now prepared to proceed to the second point of the argument, which is:

2. To ascertain whether the writers of the accounts which we have, were actual witnesses of the events which they describe.

In regard to this point, the testimony of the witnesses themselves is to be taken. It is the usage in a court of justice to ask the witnesses upon the stand, with respect to the opportunities they enjoyed for certainly knowing that what they state is true, and to the circumstances, on the other hand, if there were any, which might have exposed them to the danger of mistake. In a word, the witnesses

Opportunities of knowing.

House-breaker's trial.

give their own account of the circumstances, favorable or otherwise, in which they were placed, as observers of the facts to which they testify, and this account is admitted and believed, like all other testimony, unless something appears which shows that the witnesses are not to be trusted, and then *all their statements* are to be abandoned together.

I noticed in the trial above described, that the counsel for the prisoners was particular on this point. He asked the witness, after he had stated all the facts in respect to his detecting the man in the chamber, as follows :

" But are you *sure* that that man," pointing to the prisoner, " is the man that you saw ? "

" Yes, perfectly sure. I could not be mistaken, for I took him at once to the watch-house."

This was decisive ; it proved that the witness had a most excellent opportunity to know what he described, and that there was no possibility of mistake. Suppose, however, that the thief had been active enough to have run down stairs and escaped, allowing the witness only a glimpse of his person,—and that the next day the witness had met a man in the street whom he supposed was the same, and had procured his arrest and trial, the jury would in this case have placed far less confidence in his testimony, even if they knew that he was a very honest man, and intended to tell the truth. The difficulty would have been the want of a full and unquestionable opportunity on the part of the witness, to know what the truth was.

In the same manner, where there is *any thing* which might operate to produce delusion, a jury receives testimony with great hesitation. For example, suppose a witness should testify that he saw some supernatural appearance in going through a dark wood by night. Few would believe him, however honest a man he might be, on account of the great danger of being deceived in going through a scene full

Sacred writers could not have been mistaken.

of irregular objects, such as the varieties of vegetation, the broken rocks, the whitened trunks of decaying trees,—going through too at night, when all forms are vague and indeterminate, and easily modified by the imagination or the fears. Again, an honest man, one in whose word I place great confidence, may tell me of a cure for rheumatism. He says that he has tested the remedy, and that it always produces a great effect. I receive his testimony with great doubt, because he can not probably know how much the benefit which he experienced was owing to the supposed remedy, and how much to other causes. If the same man should come home from Boston, and say that the State House was burnt—that he saw it all in flames—or state any other extraordinary fact, far more extraordinary than the efficacy of a remedy for rheumatism, I should believe him, since these would be cases in which he would have had certain means of knowing that what he stated was really true.

Now if we examine the miracles which our Savior performed, and the opportunity which the disciples had of witnessing them, we shall see that there could not have been a mistake. Remember, however, that I am not now saying that their story must be *true*. I am only here showing that the witnesses could not have been *mistaken*. They *must have known whether what they were saying was true or not*. The case could not be like that of a man relating a ghost story,—something which he thinks is true, but which is in reality not so. The things done, were done in open day. They were done in presence of multitudes; and they were of such a nature that those who witnessed them could not be deceived; healing what was called incurable diseases; feeding multitudes with a small supply of food; walking on the sea; rising from the grave, after remaining upon the cross till even Roman soldiers were satisfied that life was gone;—

Proofs that sacred writers could not have been mistaken.

and who could be a better judge of death than a Roman soldier? These, and a multitude of similar things, might be given as proofs that these witnesses could not be mistaken in what they described. They *knew whether they were true or not.* And consequently if the third point, that is their honesty, should be proved, we must believe what they say. If they had informed us only of a *few* miraculous events, and if these were seen but by a few people, or were of such a character as to render the witnesses peculiarly liable to be deceived in respect to them, we might have admitted their honesty, but denied the truth of their statements. As it is, however, we can not do this.

Not only were the facts themselves of so open and public a character that there could not be any mistake about them, but the writers of our accounts were eye-witnesses of them. They did not obtain a knowledge of them by hearsay or report; they wrote what *they themselves saw and heard.* It is noticeable that they themselves placed peculiar stress upon this circumstance. Luke begins his gospel by saying, “It seemed good to me, *having had perfect understanding of all things from the first*, to write unto thee.” John, at the close of his book, distinctly records the fact that the *writer of the account* was one of the *principal actors* in the scenes he describes; Peter, in his defense of himself before the Jewish authorities, says he can not but speak *the things he has seen and heard*; and perhaps the most striking of all is, that when the apostles came together to elect one to take the place of Judas, they restricted themselves in their selection to those who had been, *from the beginning, witnesses of the whole.* “Wherefore,” was the proposition, “of these men which have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained

| They were eye-witnesses. | Third point. | Their style of writing. |
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to be a *witness with us* of his resurrection.” These men understood the laws of the human mind in regard to believing testimony. They knew well what was necessary to make out a case, and they secured it.

We have now explained how the two first points in our chain of reasoning are established, and we may consider it as certain, in the first place, that though our witnesses are not living, and consequently can not present us their testimony in person, and although so long a time has elapsed, that their original writings are worn out and destroyed, yet that there is abundant evidence that we have the real account which they delivered ; and, in the second place, that they could not be mistaken in the facts to which they gave their testimony, as they were eye-witnesses of them, and the facts are of such a nature that there could be no delusion. There is no possible way now, after these two points are established, by which their testimony can be set aside, except by the supposition that they were impostors. This brings us to the third and last point of our argument, which is :

3. We must have evidence that our witnesses are credible ; that is, that they are honest men, and that their word can be relied upon.

The evidence on this point is, if possible, more complete and more absolutely unquestionable than upon either of the others ; the honest and candid manner in which they relate their story is evidence ; it is plain, straightforward, and simple. Their writings have exactly the air and tone of men conscious that they are telling the truth, but aware that it will be regarded with very different feelings by their different readers. They narrate, frankly and fully, the events in which they or their companions were to blame ; and they do nothing more in regard to the guilt of their enemies. There are no palliating or extenuating statements or ex-

Impartiality.Barabbas chosen and Christ **rejected.**

pressions on the one side, nor is there any disposition to apply epithets of odium or exaggeration upon the other. The story is simply told, and left to work its own way.

How differently do men act in other cases ! How easily can we perceive upon which side the writer is, when he gives an account of circumstances relating to a contest between two individuals or two parties ! Open to any history of the battle of Waterloo, or of the campaign in Russia, and how long can you doubt whether the author is a friend or an enemy of Napoleon ? Now turn to St. John's account of the trial and crucifixion of the Savior—a most unparalleled scene of cruel suffering—and there is not a harsh epithet, and scarcely an expression of displeasure, on the part of the writer, from the beginning to the end of it ; you would scarcely know what was his opinion. Take, for instance, the account of the preference of Barabbas by the Jews. Another writer would have said, "The Jews were so bent on the destruction of their innocent and helpless victim, that when Pilate proposed to release him, in accordance with their custom of having a prisoner annually set at liberty on the day of their great festival, they chose a base malefactor in his stead ; they preferred that a robber, justly condemned for his crimes, should be let loose upon society, rather than that the meek and lowly Jesus should again go forth to do good to all." But what does John say ? There is no attempt in his account to make a display of the guilt of the Jews—no effort to throw odium upon them—no exaggeration—no coloring. 'Will ye,' says Pilate, 'that I release unto you the King of the Jews ? Then cried they all again, saying—Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.'

The whole account of our Savior's history, as comprised in the narratives of the four evangelists, is pervaded by this same spirit from the beginning to the end. In the midst of one of the greatest moral excitements which the world has

Elevated views.

They were disinterested.

ever seen, and writing upon the very subject of that excitement, and themselves the very objects of it, these narrators exhibit a self-possession and a composure almost without a parallel. Exposed unceasingly to most extraordinary persecutions and sufferings, they never revile, or retort upon their oppressors. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion, when reading the chapters of the New Testament, that the writers understood and felt the moral sublimity of the position they were occupying. They seemed to have been conscious that they were speaking, not to a few thousand cotemporaries in Judea, but to countless millions of human beings, scattered over the earth, or coming up, generation after generation, to read their story, to the end of time. They rise entirely above all the influences then pressing so strongly upon them, and in calm and fearless independence offer their testimony. They could not have done this—it is not in human nature to have done it—had they not been sustained by this consideration, viz. : *They knew that they were speaking THE TRUTH on the most momentous subject ever presented to men, and THAT THEY WERE SPEAKING IT TO THE WHOLE WORLD.*

Another proof of their honesty is, that they were entirely disinterested ; or rather, they were interested to conceal the truth, not to tell it. Their testimony brought them nothing, and could bring them nothing, but reproach, and suffering, and death. They saw this in the history of the Savior, and he, instead of endeavoring to keep them unconscious of the sufferings that awaited them, plainly and frankly foretold all, just before he left them. He told them in the most affecting manner—the communication he made is recorded in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the Gospel of St. John—all that should befall them. “ You must not expect,” said he, in substance, “ to find the world more kind to you than it has been to me. They have persecuted me, and they will persecute you. They will put you out of the syna-

Our Savior's farewell.

Interested witnesses.

gogues, and whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service. I tell you these things beforehand, so that when the time shall come, you will remember that I told you, and be comforted then. I wish you to understand the dangers and trials that await you. You must not, however, be dejected or discouraged because I have told you these things. It is necessary for me to go away, and it is necessary for you to encounter these evils. But it is only for a little time. The years will pass away swiftly, and when you have done your duty here, you shall come to me again, and find a perpetual home with me and my Father in a happier world."

Such was the substance of this part of our Savior's farewell address. His disciples listened to it in sadness, but they did not shrink from their duty. A very few hours after hearing these last words of their Master in their place of retirement, they found themselves gazing in terror, and at a distance, at that dreadful throng which was pouring out of the gates of Jerusalem to see their beloved Master struggling upon the cross. They were overwhelmed by this scene: but terror triumphed only for a time. Immediately after the Savior's ascension, we find them assembled, making calmly, but with fixed determination, their arrangements for future efforts, and waiting for the command from above—one hundred and twenty in an upper chamber, planning a campaign against the world! They knew, they must have known, that they themselves went forward to suffering and to death. They went forward, however. They told their story. They suffered and died. Must they not have been *honest* men?

The way in which men are *interested* is always to be looked at in judging of their testimony. If a jurymen is interested in the result of a trial, he is set aside; he can not judge impartially. If a witness is interested at all, his testimony is received with a great deal of caution, or else abso-

Battle of Lexington.

lutely rejected. And whenever a case is of such a nature that all those who were witnesses of the facts are interested, on one side or on the other, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the truth. A very striking example of this is furnished by the circumstances of the battle of Lexington, at the commencement of the American Revolution. Each of the parties, anticipating a struggle, and desirous of being prepared for it, had made efforts to get the arms and ammunition of the country as far as possible into their own hands; and the British general in Boston, understanding that there was at Concord a supply of military stores, conceived the design of sending a party in the night to Concord to obtain it. He kept his design, or rather endeavored to keep it, secret. Late in the evening, the troops embarked in boats on the west side of the peninsula, on which Boston is built, and sailed across the cove to the main land.

This was done in silence, and it was hoped in secrecy. The Americans, however, by some means or other heard of the plan. The country was alarmed; men rode on horseback at midnight from town to town, ringing the bells and calling out the inhabitants, and by three o'clock in the morning a number of troops were collected at Lexington, which was on the road to Concord, to oppose the progress of the British detachment.



THE ALARM.

Parliament and Congress.

Now, neither party wished to *begin* the contest. Like two boys eager for a quarrel, each wished to throw the odium of striking the first blow upon the other. This difficulty is however usually soon surmounted, and in this case the musketry was soon speaking distinctly on both sides. After a momentary conflict, the Americans were dispersed, and the British moved on to the place of their destination.

Now, after all this was over, there arose the question, not in itself very important, one would think, but yet made so by those concerned at the time. "Who began this affray? Who fired *first*?" To determine this point, the American Congress are said to have instituted a formal inquiry. They examined witnesses who were on the spot and saw the whole, and they found abundant and satisfactory evidence that the *British* soldiers fired first, and that the Americans did not discharge their pieces until they were compelled to do it in self-defense. The British Parliament entered into a similar inquiry, and they came to an equally satisfactory conclusion —only it happened to be exactly the reverse of the other. They examined witnesses who were on the spot and saw the whole, and they found abundant evidence that the *American* soldiers fired first, and that the British did not discharge their pieces until they were compelled to do it in self-defense. Now, the reason for this disagreement unquestionably was, that each nation examined only its own soldiers, and the soldiers on both sides were interested. Suppose now, that there had been in the American army a considerable number who admitted that the first guns were fired from their own ranks. Suppose that, in consequence of this their testimony, they brought upon themselves the dislike of the whole army, and, to a great extent, of the nation at large—how strong would have been the reliance placed upon such testimony! "There can not be a doubt," the British would have said, "that you fired upon us first—half of *your own troops* say so." This would

| Points proved. | Argument from prophecy. | The Savior foretold. |
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nave been a very fair inference. When men bear testimony contrary to their own interests or feelings, they are generally believed.

We have thus abundant evidence that the original propagators of the Gospel were honest men, and this completes the three positions necessary to prove that the Christian miracles were actually performed.

1. We are sure that the witnesses are honest men.
2. The facts are of such a nature, that the witnesses could not have been deceived in them.
3. It is proved that we have exactly the account which they themselves gave.

The miracles being once proved, the *divine authority of the religion* is proved; for no man can imagine that the Deity would exert his power in producing miraculous effects to give authority to a message which he did not send.

There is one other independent head of the external evidences of Christianity; it is the argument from *prophecy*. They who brought the communication which is offered to us as a message from heaven, declared that they were endued with the power, not only of working miracles, but of *foretelling future events*. In some cases, human sagacity can foresee what is future, and even distant. These men however professed to exercise a prophetic power in cases to which no human skill or foresight could have extended. Such a power as this is evidently miraculous, and they who possess it must have received it from the Creator.

One or two examples will clearly illustrate the nature of this argument. A great number of the prophets who appeared in the early years of the sacred history, foretold the coming of a Savior. Precisely what sort of a Savior he was to be, was not distinctly foretold—at least not so distinctly as to remove all misconceptions on the subject. So certain is it however that such prophecies were uttered, and generally

published, that there prevailed throughout the Jewish nation, and even to some extent in neighboring countries, a general expectation that an extraordinary personage was to appear. We have evidence enough of this—not merely from the Scriptures themselves, but from a multitude of other writings, which existed at that time, and which have come down to us by separate and independent channels. There can be no question in the mind of any one who will examine the subject, that the coming of Christ was predicted with so much distinctness as to produce an almost universal expectation of the appearance of some very extraordinary personage; and the event corresponded with the prediction. A most extraordinary personage appeared; the most extraordinary, as all will acknowledge—Christians and infidels—that ever appeared upon the earth.

Our Savior's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem is another example. The scene was described with astonishing minuteness and accuracy, sixty or seventy years before it took place—and there was, at the time of the prediction, no reason whatever, so far as human foresight could extend, to expect such a catastrophe.

Now, to examine fully this species of argument, several points ought to receive special attention. First, we must ascertain that the prophecy was really anterior to the event which is alledged to have occurred in fulfillment of it. This now, in regard to writings and facts so ancient as those of the Scriptures, is a peculiarly difficult task. Secondly, we must know that the event is such an one as human foresight could not have foreseen. Thirdly, that there were not, in similar writings, a multitude of other prophecies *which failed*, and that those only have been preserved, which have apparently been verified. Among the ignorant and vulgar, nothing is more common than a belief in the powers of fortunetellers, or of the prophetic meaning of signs and dreams.

False prophecies.

Subject difficult.

The reason why this imposture retains its ascendancy is, that the *few successful cases* are remembered and talked about, and the cases of *failure* are neglected and forgotten. If a person predicts at random in regard to common events, he must sometimes be successful, and if his votaries will forget the unsuccessful attempts, he may soon have the reputation of a conjurer. Now we must ascertain that the prophecies of the Bible are not of this character, that is, a few lucky predictions among a multitude of failures. Fourthly, we must ascertain that the events themselves were not under the control of men in such a way as to enable those who were interested in the success of the prophecy to bring about the corresponding result.

Now to examine thoroughly all these points, so as really to form an independent judgment upon them, and to take nothing upon trust, requires, in some instances, no little maturity of mind, and in others, no little scholarship and laborious research. The young must almost entirely take this argument upon trust. I can only explain its nature, and thus prepare you to read more understandingly other works on this subject. Those who have gone into this argument most thoroughly, as is the case in respect to all the historical evidences of Christianity, have been most convinced of the firmness of the ground. The most profound scholars in all Christian nations, if they have given the subject due attention, have been most decided in their belief of the Christian religion.

This completes the view which I intended to give of the historical argument. It would require a volume to present the argument *itself* in all its detail. My design has been to give a clear idea of the nature of this kind of reasoning, not to present all the facts upon which the various pillars of the argument are founded.

And here I might rest this part of my subject, were it not

Were the Christian witnesses believed ?

Contest with Paganism.

that there is one consideration which corroborates very much the conclusion to which we have come. The question very naturally arises, "Was the testimony of the Christian witnesses received as true by those to whom it was originally addressed ?" It seems to be a plain case, that the disciples of Christ made out very decisive evidence of their divine commission ; but the people who lived at that time, and upon the spot, had a much better opportunity of judging in this case than we have. Now, did they believe this account ?"

This is a very proper question. It is always asked in similar cases. A merchant will inquire, "Is the report *believed* which was circulated on 'Change to-day ?'" "Was it *generally believed* in London that such or such an event would take place ?" And this belief or disbelief on the part of those who have the best opportunities of knowing, is sometimes regarded as the strongest evidence which can be procured. It is right, therefore, to ask whether the extraordinary story of the Christians was believed by those who were upon the spot to discover error or imposture, if any was to be found.

The answer is, *It was believed*. The story spread with a rapidity to which no other revolution in the public mind can afford a parallel. When the "hundred and twenty" assembled in their upper room, after the death of Christ, paganism was enjoying undisturbed and unquestioned possession of the whole Roman empire. Paganism reigned in every crowded city and in every distant province. Her temples crowned a thousand summits ; and the multitude, whose interests were identified with the support of her rights, might at any time arm themselves with all the power of the Cæsars to resist the encroachments of truth. *A hundred and twenty*, with the story of a crucified Galilean rising from the dead, came forth to attack this mighty fabric ; and they prevailed. Opprobrium and ridicule,—gentle persuasion and stern men-

| Power of truth. | Internal evidence. | Unity of the Scriptures. |
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aces,—imprisonment, fire, and sword,—torture and death, tried all their powers in vain. And by what means did the fearless assailants in this most unequal war prevail against such an array as this? Why, simply by reiterating the declaration, *Jesus Christ did actually and truly rise from the grave; and it is the duty of all mankind to repent of their sins and believe in him.* And they conquered. “The truth is great, and it will prevail,” said a Roman writer. He could not have found an example like this. The simple declaration of a number of competent witnesses, after a most energetic struggle, prevails over one of the greatest civil and military powers which the world has ever seen. Yes; the story was believed. It spread with unexampled rapidity and revolutionized the moral world.

But we must pass to the second species of evidence we have enumerated.

II. INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

This evidence consists of an examination of the contents of the Bible, to see whether the declarations it contains are such as we may suppose would really come from our Maker. We ought to enter upon such an examination, however, with great caution; for if the book is really a message from Heaven, we are to receive it, whatever it may contain. It is not for us to decide what our Maker ought, and what he ought not, to communicate to us. It is interesting, however, to examine the contents of the Scriptures, to observe the indications, with which the volume is filled, that it is from God. Some of these indications I shall mention.

1. The remarkable simplicity of its whole design. It seems to have *one simple and single object* from the beginning to the end; and this is very remarkable, if we consider

The Bible a number of books.

Its single object.

how many distinct authors it has, and in how distant periods it was written. The Bible is not a *book*, but a *library*. It consists of a large number of books entirely separate and distinct, bound up together. The times at which the various parts were written are scattered over a period of *fifteen hundred years*. The authors are numerous. It would be a very interesting exercise for young persons to attempt to make out an accurate list of them. They are of every variety of character and standing—learned and unlearned, rich and poor, kings, poets, generals. There is every variety in the character of the authors and of the style; and yet one single, simple design is kept in view from the beginning to the end, with a steadiness which is astonishing. But what is that object? It may be stated thus:

The Bible is *a history of the redemption of our race by Jesus Christ*, and it is nothing more. From the beginning to the end of it, with a very few, if any exceptions, it is nothing but that. Open at Genesis and follow on, chapter after chapter, and book after book, until you come to the final benediction in the last chapter of Revelation, it all bears upon this theme. Now, if this book was planned by Jehovah, and if he superintended its execution during the fifteen centuries it was in progress, all this is easily accounted for. No other supposition can account for it.

But I must show more fully that this is the single and simple aim of the Scriptures. Let us briefly review its contents. It begins by explaining simply and clearly the creation of the world, and God's design in creating it. His intention was to have had a happy community to tenant it, who should be united in each other, and united to him; forming one family of undivided hearts and aims, all interested in the common welfare, and all looking to him as to the common bond of union and the common source of happiness. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

The Bible a history of Christ.

thy neighbor as thyself," was unquestionably the law originally written on the human heart.

Men sinned, however;—they broke God's law, and the Bible then describes the consequences of sin, in bringing suffering upon the human family. The earth was filled with violence. One dreadful experiment was tried, by the flood, of the power of punishment, of retribution, to bring men back to duty; but they who escaped the flood escaped only to go on in sin.

It is noticeable that, in one of the very first chapters of the Bible, the coming of the Savior is foretold, and from that time the sacred history marks out and follows with minute accuracy the line of succession which is to conduct us to that Savior. There were a vast many nations on the earth, or existing in embryo, at the time when the Israelites were in Egypt, whose history is far more important, in every respect but one, than is the history of the Jews. There were the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Persians. The sacred history neglects them all, and turns its whole attention to a body of Egyptian slaves; and why? Why it was because among these slaves there was the *ancestor of the coming Messiah*.

The Bible represents Jehovah as conducting this nation by his own hand to a country which was to be their home, in order that he might preserve them separate from the rest of mankind, and make them the keepers of his communications with men. A great deal of the Old Testament history is occupied in giving us an account of the particular institutions established among this people, and of the circumstances of their own private history. In regard to their institutions, there seem to have been two distinct objects. One was to preserve the chosen people separate from the idolatrous nations around, in order that the worship of the true God might be the better preserved. The other object, perhaps more im-

Sacrifices.

Meaning of sacrifices.

portant, was effected by the institution of sacrifices ; of this I shall presently speak more fully. This Jewish nation, however, in its institutions and history, is followed by the sacred writers, who keep all the time as close as possible to the line of succession leading to Jesus Christ. The coming Savior is often alluded to, especially whenever any great crisis occurring in their history furnishes an occasion upon which God makes to some leading individual a distinct communication in regard to his designs.

I have mentioned *sacrifices*. The design of Jehovah in establishing these rites so early, and taking such effectual precautions to secure their observance, seems to have been this : to familiarize the minds of men to the idea, that *there must be something more than penitence to atone for sin*. We are all much more ready to admit this in reference to any other government than to the divine. Many a father sees the inefficacy of pardon granted merely upon the ground of sorrow and confession, to restrain his sons from sin ; and many a politician will admit the folly of such a course in civil society, who yet think that God may govern his dominions on such a principle. In all God's dealings, however, with man, he has taken other ground. Sacrifices were instituted *so early*, that they have spread to almost every people under the sun. Wherever you go—to the most distant heathen nation—to the most barbarous tribe—or to the remotest island of the ocean, you will find almost all men prepared, by the very customs which have been handed down from the time of Noah, to admit the necessity, that *there must be retributive suffering where there has been sin*. God required the Jews, when they had done wrong, to bring an offering ; not to lead them to suppose that the sufferings of bulls and goats could take away sin, but to accustom them to the conviction that *some atonement* was necessary. The effect upon their minds was undoubtedly this :—A man hav-

Their moral influence.

ing committed some sin, instead of merely confessing his guilt, and expecting forgiveness as a matter of course, came with the innocent dove, or the harmless lamb, and offered it in sacrifice ; and when he did it, if he did it in the right spirit, he unquestionably felt that his sin had done an injury to the government of God, which he, *himself*, could not repair. He could not come back to innocence *alone*. The ceremony must have had a most powerful influence in producing a practical conviction that sin, once committed, could not be recalled by the individual who had committed it, but must involve consequences beyond his control. That is precisely the conviction necessary to enable us to avail ourselves of the redemption of Christ. It is exactly the preparation of heart to lead us to him. We have sinned, and the evil which we have done it is out of our power to remedy. We may cease sinning, but the evil influence of our past guilt must be checked by some other agency far more powerful than any penitence of ours. The Jews, then, by coming habitually to the sacrifices of their law, had this feeling thoroughly wrought into all their thoughts and feelings on the subject of sin and pardon. When they came with sincere penitence to offer the sacrifice required by the law, and with such a feeling as I have described, they were undoubtedly forgiven through the mediation of a far greater sacrifice, which was only *represented* by the dove or the lamb.

If we thus look at the Jewish history and institutions, and consider their spirit and design, we shall see that they all point to Christ. One single object is aimed at in all. After the history is brought down to the return from captivity, it is suddenly concluded—and why? Because all is now ready for the coming of Christ. There is a chasm of some hundred years, not because the events of that time are less interesting than of the preceding—to the eye of the mere scholar or political historian, they are more so—but because

Conclusion of the book.

they do not bear at all upon the great event, *the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ*, to which the whole Bible tends. The nation from which the promised Savior is to come, is followed in its various difficulties and adventures, until it becomes finally established in the country where the Messiah is to appear, and then is left. There could not be a stronger proof that the Bible has the history of Christ for its great object, or that that object is kept steadily in view.

As we draw toward the development of the drama, however, the story becomes more minute, and the interest increases. The great Redeemer at length appears. We have, from four separate writers, a narrative of his life; we have a simple account of the first efforts to spread the news of salvation through him; we have a few of the writings of some of those who originally received his instructions, and then a revelation of the future—in some respects clear and distinct in the awful pictures of scenes to come which it draws, and in others dark, and as yet unintelligible to us—closes the volume.

There is something deeply sublime in the language with which this final conclusion of the sacred volume is announced. Perhaps it was intended to apply particularly to the book of Revelation itself, but we can scarcely read it without the conviction that the writer felt that he was bringing to a close a series of communications from heaven which had been making for fifteen hundred years. The great subject of the whole was now fairly presented to mankind. The nature and the effects of sin, the way of salvation, and the future scenes through which we are all to pass, had been described, and he closes with the invitation—O how cordially it is expressed—“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come,—and let him that heareth say, Come;”—that is, spread the invitation far and wide. Let every one that

| Appropriate language. | Advent of the Savior. | Its time and place. |
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heareth it repeat the sound. "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him partake of the water of life freely."

And then he says—and how appropriate for the last language of the Bible!—

"I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Yes, the plan and object of the Bible is single and simple from beginning to end. Amidst all that endless variety which makes it an inexhaustible mine of interest and instruction, the *great ultimate design* is never lost sight of or forgotten. That design is *the redemption of a lost world by the Son of God*; a design which is surely great enough for Jehovah to announce to his creatures.

There is something interesting in the *time and place* selected for the advent of the Savior. This earth being a globe, of course has not, that is, its surface has not, any geographical center; but if we take into view its moral and political condition and history, it has some parts far more suitable to be radiant points from which any extraordinary message from heaven is to be disseminated, than others. It would be difficult to find a place more suitable for such a purpose than the very country chosen by Jehovah as the scene of the sufferings and death of Christ. Look upon the map, and you find that the land of Canaan is situated upon the eastern coast of the Mediterranean sea; and if you look east, west, north, and south, at the various connections of this spot, you will find that no other on earth will compare with it for the purpose for which it was

The Mediterranean sea.

selected. Egypt and the other regions of Africa on the south, are balanced by Syria and the Caucasian countries on the north. There were the Persian and Assyrian empires on the east, and there were the Grecian and Roman empires on the west. India and China, with their immense multitudes, are upon one side, and modern France, and England, and Germany, with their vast political power, upon the other. Then look upon the Mediterranean sea,—on the borders of which Canaan lies,—bathing as it does the shores of three quarters of the globe, and bearing upon its bosom almost every ship that sailed for the first five thousand years of the earth's history. In a word, if no such communication as the Christian revelation had ever been made from heaven, and the earth had remained in darkness and paganism to the present day, its history having remained, in other respects, the same as it has been ; and we had looked over it to find the best station for an embassy from above, Judea would have been the very spot. We should have pointed to the Levant, and said, here is the moral center of the world. If a missionary from heaven is to be sent, let him be stationed here.

It is surprising how much of the interesting history of the human race has had for its scene the shores of the Mediterranean. Egypt is there. There is Greece. Xerxes, Darius, Solomon, Cæsar, Hannibal, knew no extended sea but the Mediterranean. The mighty armies of Persia, and the smaller, but invincible bands of the Grecians, passed its tributaries. Pompey fled across it ; the fleets of Rome and Carthage sustained their deadly struggles upon its waters ; and, until the discovery of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope, the commerce of the world passed through the ports of the Mediterranean. If we go back to ancient ages, we find the Phenician sailors—the first who ventured upon the unstable element—slowly and fearfully

Interesting associations.

steering their little barks along the shores of this sea ; and if we come down to modern times, we see the men-of-war of every nation proudly plowing its waves, or riding at anchor



THE MAN-OF-WAR.

in its harbors. There is not a region upon the face of the earth so associated with the recollection of all that is interesting in the history of our race, as the shores of the Mediterranean sea ; nor a place more likely to be chosen by the Creator as the spot where he would establish his communication with men, than the land of Judea.

The *time* selected is as worthy of notice as the place ; I mean now, the time of the advent of the Messiah. The world had been the scene of war and bloodshed for many centuries ; empire after empire had arisen, each upon the ruins of the preceding, none however obtaining a very general sway ; at last the Roman power obtained universal ascen-

Character of God.

Language of nature.

dency—and all was at peace. A very considerable degree of civilization and knowledge prevailed over a great part of the then known world; and every thing was favorable to the announcement and rapid spread of a message from heaven, provided that the message itself should come properly authenticated. The message did come, and it was properly authenticated; and the peculiar suitableness of the time and place selected was seen in the very rapid spread of the Gospel over almost half the globe.

There is another topic to be noticed, which forms a part of the internal evidence of the truth of Christianity. The character and administration of God, as exhibited in the Bible, correspond precisely with the same character and administration, as exhibited in the light of nature. They both exhibit God as most benevolent in his character, but *most decided and efficient in his government*. In both, we find him providing most fully for the happiness of his creatures; but in both we see him frowning upon sin with an awful severity of judgment. This is a fundamental point, and it ought to be fully understood. Let us look then at God, as he reveals himself in his providence, compared with the views of him which the Bible presents.

See yonder child, beginning life with streams of enjoyment coming in at every sense; he is so formed, that every thing that he has to do is a source of delight. He has an *eye*. God has contrived it most ingeniously, to be the means by which pleasure comes in every moment to him. He has an *ear*, so intricately formed, that no anatomist or physiologist has yet been able to understand its mysteries. God has so planned it, that he takes in with delight the sounds which float around him. How many times, and in how many ways, does he find enjoyment by its instrumentality! The tones of conversation—the evening song of his mother—the hum of the insect—the noise of the storm—the rumbling of distant

thunder ;—for how many different but delightful emotions has the Creator provided ! So with all the other senses ; and now, after you have examined in this way the whole structure, body and mind, of this being, follow him out to a summer's walk, and see how a benevolent Creator pours upon him, from all the scenery of nature, an almost overwhelming tide of delight. God smiles upon him in the aspect of the blue heavens, in the verdure of the fields, in the balmy breath of air upon his cheek—and in the very powers and faculties themselves, which he has so formed, that every motion is delight, and every pulsation a thrill of pleasure. Such a revelation does nature make to us of the character of God, and of his feelings toward his creatures ; and the testimony of the Bible corresponds—“ God is love.”

But nature speaks to us sometimes in another tone. Let this child grow up, and abandon himself to vice and crime, and after the lapse of a few years, let us see him again. How changed will be the scene ! To see him, you must follow me to the hospital-room of an almshouse ; for he has given himself up to vice, and endured suffering as a vagabond in the streets, until society can no longer endure to witness his misery, and men send him to an asylum out of their sight, in mercy both to themselves and to him. He lies upon his bed of straw in uninterrupted agony—his bones are gnawed, and his flesh corroded by disease—every motion is torment, every pulsation is anguish ; for the God who has so formed the human constitution, that in innocence, and in the health which generally attends it, all is happiness and peace, has yet so formed it, that vice can bring upon it sufferings,—awful sufferings—of which no one but the miserable victim can conceive. I once saw in an almshouse, a sufferer, whose picture has been in my imagination while writing the above. I have used general terms in my description. I might have given a much more detailed and vivid picture of his condition, but

The awful misery which vice sometimes brings upon its votaries.

it was too shocking to describe. Were my readers to witness the scene, the image of it would haunt them day and night. As I stood by the side of this man, and reflected that God had brought him into that condition, and that God *was holding him there*, and probably would hold him in the same awful suffering while life should remain, I could not help saying to myself, "With how efficient and decided a moral Governor have we do?" No *man* would have held this miserable being in his sufferings a moment: the superintendent of the hospital would have released him instantly, if it had been in his power; but God had the power, and he held the guilty breaker of his law under the dreadful weight of its penalty. Man shrinks from witnessing suffering, even where it is necessary to inflict it; but this feeling will not measure, and it has no power to limit God's dreadful energy in the punishment of sin. All nature teaches us this, and the language that the Bible uses is the same. "God is a consuming fire." Our feelings can no more contemplate with composure, as our hearts are now constituted, the judgments which the Bible denounces against the wicked in another world, than they can the agonies of delirium tremens, or the gnawings of the diseases with which God overwhelms the dissipated and the vile. In both cases there is a severity whose justice we must admit, but whose consequences we can not calmly follow. If any one thinks that I describe the character of God in too dark and gloomy colors, I have only to say, that all nature and all revelation unite in painting God *in the most dark and gloomy colors possible*, as he exhibits himself *toward those who persist in breaking his law*. He is love to his friends, but he is a consuming fire to his foes; and every one ought to go to the judgment, expecting to find a Monarch thus decided and efficient in the execution of his laws, presiding there.

"The Lord reigneth, let the earth *rejoice*," says the Psalm-

Butler's Analogy.

Experimental evidence.

ist ; and again he says, “ The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble.” We have abundant evidence, both in nature and revelation, that we must rejoice with trembling, under the government of God ; for that government is most efficient and decided against sin—and we are sinners.

There are many other points of correspondence between the character and administration of God, as described in the Bible, and as exhibited in the constitution of nature ; but I must not stop now to describe them. Butler, in an admirable work, usually called Butler's Analogy, has explored this ground fully ; and I would recommend to all my readers who take an interest in this subject, to obtain and study that work. I say *study* it, for it is not a work to be merely *read*, in the ordinary sense of that term ; it must be most thoroughly studied, and studied too by minds in no inconsiderable degree mature, in order to be fully appreciated.

I have endeavored, by thus mentioning several points in which evidence may be found in favor of the truth of the Scriptures, from an examination of their contents, to illustrate the nature of the Internal Evidence. I have not designed to present the argument fully.* Having accomplished, however, the purpose intended, I now proceed to the third head I proposed.

III. EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE.

The *Experimental* Evidence of the truth of Christianity is *its moral power* over the human heart. This is the most convincing of all. It is direct. There is no laborious examination of witnesses to bring the truth to us—no groping in

* I would recommend to those of my readers who are interested in this part of my subject, the examination of the following works: Chalmers's Evidences of Christianity; Paley's do.; Alexander's do.; Leslie's Short Method with Deists; Paley's Horæ Paulinæ; Butler's Analogy.

Case of sickness supposed.

the dimness of ancient times, or straining of the sight to ascertain the forms of objects, and the characters of occurrences there. All is before us. We can see distinctly,—for the proof is near. We can examine it minutely and leisurely,—for it is constantly recurring.

I have remarked, that I considered this species of evidence far more calculated to make a strong impression upon the mind than either of the two preceding classes which I have described, on account of the difficulty, on the part of those whose lives are not devoted to literary pursuits, of looking back eighteen hundred years, and judging with confidence of evidence relating to events that occurred then. But I have heard it remarked, by men amply qualified to investigate such subjects, that the power of the Bible, as they have often seen it exerted, in elevating to virtue and to happiness some miserable victim of vice and crime, has made a far stronger impression upon them, in favor of its divine origin, than any examination of the labored arguments of learned men. Now this must be so, not only in the case of Christianity, but in all similar cases.

Suppose that some dreadful plague should break out in London, and after raging for many months,—suspending all business, driving away from the city all who could fly, and carrying consternation and death into all the families that should remain,—suppose that, after all this, the news should arrive, that in some distant part of the earth a remedy had been discovered for the disease. We will imagine it to have been in China. Perhaps the same disease had broken out in former times at Canton, and some plant growing in that vicinity had been found to be a specific against it: it would cure the sick and protect the healthy. The government of Great Britain concludes to send a ship to China to obtain a supply of the remedy. After waiting the proper time for the voyage, a telegraph announces the arrival of the ship on her

return. She sails up the Thames, comes to anchor, and soon the remedy for which they have all waited so anxiously is in full circulation about the city. Now, what will interest the people of London most in such a case? Will it be an examination of the *officers of that ship*, in order to satisfy themselves that they are not imposing some spurious article on the nation? Will they lay aside the remedy itself, and allow the sick to die, and the well to be attacked, while they examine the proof that this ship has actually been to China, and that her supercargo was really faithful in obtaining the identical article for which he was sent? No—all such inquiries, if they are made at all, would be left to the few official agents by whom the ship had been employed. The mass of the population would turn their thoughts to the remedy itself, with the eager question, "Will this medicine cure?" And, notwithstanding any skepticism or opposition on the part of the few who might be interested in sustaining some other mode of treatment, the important remedy, *if found successful upon trial*, would soon be in universal use among the sick all over the city.

Now, shall a man who is still under the power and dominion of sin, with this great remedy, which has saved, and is continually saving thousands all around him, entirely within his reach, shall he waste his time in speculations and inquiries in regard to the manner in which Christianity came into the world, instead of flying to it at once as the remedy for all his sin and suffering? No: *come at once and try the remedy*. It restores others to health and happiness, and it will restore you. Come and be saved by it, and then you may inquire at your leisure how it came into the world.

In regard to the case supposed above, I have spoken of the skepticism or opposition of those who might be interested in some other mode of treatment. Suppose one of these men, interested in the continuance of the disease, and inhuman

The mother and her sick sons.

enough to desire on this account to perpetuate the misery of his fellows, should come into some wretched tenement in a crowded part of the city, and should find there one or two inmates under all the power of the disease. They are children. The mother has been away to some public office from which the remedy is distributed to the poor, and has obtained a supply for her dying boys. As she comes to their bedside, and begins with trembling joy to administer it, her hand is arrested by the visitor, who says to her, "Stop; how do you know that this is a real remedy for this disease. I believe it is all an imposition. That ship never came from China. I believe the captain and crew united in an attempt to impose upon the community; at any rate, you have yet no evidence to the contrary. You have not examined her papers—you have seen no official documents—you have heard no witnesses. If you are wise you will look into this subject a little more before you place your confidence in a remedy which will probably, after all, prove only imposture and delusion."

What would be the reply? The mother, if she should stop to say any thing, would say this:

"I have not time to examine any documents or witnesses; my children are dying. Beside, this medicine has cured hundreds in this city, and is curing hundreds more. Nay, I was myself sick, and it cured me. That is the evidence I rely upon. I believe it will save them, and there is nothing else to be tried."

That is in substance what she would say, and they who wish to be saved from sin should say the same. You suffer now under this disease, and you must suffer more hereafter, and nothing but Christianity *pretends to be able to save you*. This is successful, wherever it is tried. Now suppose an infidel, or a vicious man, interested in perpetuating sin in this world, and inhuman enough to be willing that the sufferings of sin

The unbeliever.

Power of Christianity.

should continue to burden his fellows, should come and say to you, "This religion is delusion—it is all an imposture." You need not go with him into any examination of documents and witnesses; you ought only to say, "Christianity saves others and makes them virtuous and happy—and I hope it will save me."

But I must present more distinctly the evidence that Christianity has power to rescue from sin, and that it exhibits this power now in the world. "And now how shall I show this?" thought I, when I first began to reflect on the way in which I should treat this part of my subject. "How shall I present most clearly and vividly to the young the *moral power* of Christianity?" I thought first of the elevated rank in knowledge, in civilization, to which all Christian nations had attained, and concluded to show, if I could, that the passions and sins of men always, when left to themselves, loaded them with a burden which kept the mind from expanding and the arts of life from flourishing, and bound down the whole community in barbarism or in subjection to despotic power. Among the thousands of nations of which this earth has been the home, there have not been more than half a dozen exceptions to this. Now Christianity, where it freely prevails, controls human passions, and purifies communities to such an extent that mind is free; and then the energies with which God has endowed the soul of man freely expand. Religion has taken off the pressure which had imprisoned them; and thus Christian nations have arisen to a rank, and power, and freedom, which no other communities have ever attained. There is not a *savage Christian* nation on the globe. A *savage Christian*! It is a contradiction in terms.

But I thought that such general views and statements were not calculated to produce so distinct and clear an impression upon the mind, especially upon the young; and

Particular case.

State prison.

then I thought that I might point my readers to particular cases of the beneficial moral influence of Christianity—such as have occurred, undoubtedly, within the observation of every one. There is not a village in our land where are not to be seen some of the triumphs of the Gospel. There is a vicious man reclaimed, or a careless, selfish, ungovernable youth made humble, and faithful, and docile, by the power of the Bible. Such cases are within the observation of every one; and if each one of my readers would look at some such instance which has occurred within his own immediate reach, and examine all its circumstances, he would find it an overwhelming proof that the Bible is indeed a remedy for sin. But the difficulty is, that such examples are so common that they lose all their power to impress us. The cases of reform from vice and sin, now continually taking place in every truly Christian country, would be regarded with admiration, were they solitary; but they are common,—very common—and thus produce a comparatively faint impression.

But to show distinctly the efficacy of this remedy for sin, I shall point you to its operation in particular cases. And in choosing the cases to present, I have selected some where the disease had indeed made great progress, but which are in other respects very common. They are both cases of convicts in a state prison. I might perhaps have selected narrations far more interesting and striking in their attendant circumstances, but I have chosen to present those which may be taken as a fair specimen of the *ordinary effects of the Bible in saving from sin*. My object is utility, and it is therefore far better to secure sound logic than to bring forward a romantic story.

The reason why I take the cases of convicts is, that I am now considering Christianity in regard to its power to heal the disease, sin; of course, the more violent the form of disease, the more clear is the exhibition of power in the remedy

Old and new system of discipline.Stories of the convicts.

which cures it. The prisons of our country may be considered as hospitals, moral hospitals, where those whose diseases have become so violent and malignant, that it is no longer safe to allow them to go at large in society, are shut up, so that they can injure no one, at least for a time. It has been, and is now the practice in many countries, to shut up those miserable victims together, and *leave them to themselves*. Of course they grow worse and worse. That practice is as absurd as it would be to send a hundred patients, in all the stages of fever, consumption, and plague, into one great crowded hospital together, with no physician, no medicine, and no attendants but turnkeys, and there to leave them, each one by means of the unobstructed intercommunication conveying his own peculiar infection to all the rest ; the whole exposed to every cause that can aggravate disease, and thus forming one living mass of pestilence and corruption. Such have been a great many prisons, and those who entered them came out far worse than they went in.

Some philanthropists formed, some years ago, the plan of visiting these prisons, and carrying the Bible there, believing that its moral power would be great enough to cure even those desperate cases of disease—and it has succeeded. A vast number of the most abandoned men have been entirely reformed by it. I do not mean that they have *pretended* to be reformed while in the prison, but have *proved* themselves reformed by their good conduct after having been restored to society, when the time of their imprisonment had expired.

The account of the first case which I shall adduce was taken down from the individual's own lips by a Christian friend, who was visiting him in the prison. The record was made without any expectation of its ever being used for the purpose to which it is appropriated here, and there is nothing extraordinary in the story, except that the subject of it was a very bad man. I give the account in his own language,

The disobedient son.

except that I have in one or two instances inserted a few words to make the sense more clear, and I have omitted some of the very frank confessions of his vices and crimes, which could not be properly introduced into this book.

THE FIRST CONVICT'S STORY.

"When I had been in prison about eighteen months, I began to think of my past ways, and to see that I had sinned against God—to think about dying, and where I should go when I die and appear before God. When I first came here, I did not think any thing about dying ; I had no just idea of the Holy Scriptures, and did not know any thing of the Lord. I first began to think about my former life, when I had been here about eighteen months. Once I went off from all my friends, and never let any of them know where I was going. I led one of my brothers away, and it was the means of his death. After I lost my brother I went home again, and my father blamed me for leading him away. I had been two years from my home, and my parents said that I was the means of my brother's death. They tried to make me steady, and get me work at home then ; but I wouldn't be steady more than a few months before I went off again. My father told me I was fitting myself for State's prison. I went away however, and it was only about two months before I committed my crime and was put into jail. That was the first time I ever saw the inside of prison. I often used to think of my brother after I came into the prison. A great many nights I used to see a black coffin placed before me, and hear a voice telling me that I must go soon and follow him. I not only thought of these things, but all my wicked thoughts and all my actions were presented before me—what I had done, and how I had walked in the sight of the Lord. I used to be a very vicious man, and all the places where I had been would appear before me. And I used to

Conversation.

be a violent blasphemer, too, and a riotous person ; and I saw a sign which said, this is the road adulterous persons and blasphemers go.

“ After I had thought about my wicked life, I felt that I had incurred the holy displeasure of the Lord, and deserved all that he could inflict upon me. I thought that I could not suffer too much. I could then see the hand of the Lord, how it had followed me in every place where I had been. I found that it was the law of the Lord that brought me here, for sins which I had committed *against* God, and not against my fellow-men.” Here the gentleman who was visiting him asked him,

“ How does your heart appear to you now ?”

“ My heart appears at times set upon evil : but then sometimes I feel that I shall get to heaven ; and then again, I feel very much discouraged. Whenever wicked thoughts arise in my heart, I sometimes feel that the Lord has given me up. Then again, there is something to enliven my feelings, and all my wicked thoughts go away ; my worldly thoughts will be drawn away, and my mind will be on heavenly things. I did not know what it meant, when my heart used to burn within me, until I asked my teacher in Sabbath-school, if man’s heart would be warm when he had right feelings of heart.”

“ Do you find temptation to sin now ?” asked the gentleman.

“ Yes, sir.”

“ What do you do ?”

“ I trust in the Lord.”

“ Do you yield to your evil passions and lusts now ?”

“ I have, sometimes. I feel now that the Lord will keep me from them. There is nothing that causes me to grieve so, as that very thing.”

“ Does it take away your happiness ?”

“ It did for a time.”

“ What security can you have, that when you go out, you will not just do as you have done ? ”

“ All my hope is in the Lord. I rely upon the mercy of the Lord to keep me. Of myself, I can do nothing : I rely upon the mercy of the Lord.”

“ Was you a drunken man ? ”

“ I have been intoxicated a number of times, but I was never much given to it.”

In the course of the conversation, the convict said :

“ I want to ask if, after men have repented of their sins, there will ever be times when they will give up to them again ? ”

“ It is a very bad sign if they do,” replied the gentleman.

“ Once, when I was greatly tempted, I wept before the Lord night after night, and there was a man appeared to me in the room, and said to me, ‘ Thy sins are pardoned ; ’ and since that I have been no more tempted, and I think it was to show me that I had trusted too much to my own heart. I thought I had been so long without any temptation that I was fairly weaned. I thought so ; but then I was tempted, and now know that I trusted more to my own heart than I did to the Lord.”

Such was the substance of the conversation ; and I beg that my readers will not forget that my object in presenting it, is not to offer them a remarkable or an interesting story. There is nothing remarkable in it, and, excepting for the purpose of my argument, nothing particularly interesting. It is, however, a remarkably fair specimen of the ordinary operation of religious truth, in convicting of sin, and bringing man back to his duty.

But I must postpone the comments upon this story which I intend to make, until I have given the second narrative. The reason why I present two is, because no *one* that I could obtain, exhibits so fully as I could wish, all the important points which I wish to bring to view.

Second story.

Nature of ardent spirit.

William's crime.

SECOND CONVICT'S STORY.

There lived in one of the middle states some years ago, a man whom I shall call William. I suppress his real name. His character was bad, and he worked in the employment of another man whose character was worse than his own.

William's employer had a quarrel with one of his neighbors, and attempted to hire William to kill him. He endeavored for five or six months to induce William to do it, but he did not succeed. William, however, manifested a degree of indecision on the subject, which encouraged his wicked employer to persevere in his attempts. A good man would have refused an application like that in such terms and in such a manner that it never would have been renewed.

At length however William and another desperate character, one of his associates, were prevailed upon to undertake the murder. When the appointed time arrived, the employer gave them a liberal supply of rum to stimulate their courage, and nerve them for the deed. After drinking the rum the two men proceeded to a wood, where they were to waylay their victim.

William lay down in the skirts of the wood and went to sleep. The other man watched. Presently however he came and awoke William, and said to him, "If we mean to do any thing we must go and do it now." William accordingly rose, and they went together. When they came to their victim, William shot at him, and then his accomplice took the gun and beat him over the head till he was dead.

Two persons were hung for this crime, and William was sentenced to the State prison for a long time. The man whom they had killed was a very bad man; but as William afterward said, that was no cloak for the murderers.

Learning to read in prison.

First lesson.

When William came to the prison he was very ignorant ; he did not know his own age accurately, and he could not read. There was in that prison, however, a very faithful chaplain, who knowing that the Bible alone could be the means of reforming the miserable convicts, always placed that book before them immediately. When they could not read, he used to teach them.

The method which this chaplain adopted in teaching the ignorant prisoners to read, was quite different from the one usually pursued with young children at school. The first lesson that he gave them was the first word in the Bible—*I-n.*

“ That word is—*In*,” the teacher would say to the prisoner in his cell—“ Can you see how many letters there in it ? ”

“ Two,” the prisoner would reply, after examining it.

“ Yes,” answers the teacher ; “ the first letter is called *i* ; the second *n*. These letters are very common in the Bible, and in all reading ; see if you can find another *n* anywhere on this page.”

The prisoner then would look very attentively along the lines until he found the letter required. If he made a mistake, and found an *m* or an *r* instead, the teacher would explain the difference, and call his attention more fully to the true form of the *n*. He would also explain the difference between the capital and small *i*, and show his pupil that he must expect to find the small *i* generally. He would then leave him, asking him to find as many of these letters as he could before the teacher would come again. The next lesson would be the next word, *the* ; and thus the pupil would go on slowly, spelling his way, until he had learned to read for himself.

The attempt to learn to read was proposed to William, and he commenced it ; and although considerably advanced

Effects of the Bible upon William.Sins against God.

in life, he made no little progress in his work. He was soon able to read considerably ; and as the truths of the word of God came home to his mind they produced their usual effects there ; they led him to see his sins, and to feel them ; and they led him to come to the Savior for pardon. His whole character was changed ; but I must allow him to describe this change in his own words.

These words were taken down by the same gentleman whom I have mentioned before. He visited the prisoner, and after first conversing with him in regard to the crime for which he had been committed, asked him,

“ Well, William, how do this and all your other sins now appear to you ? ”

“ Very great,” said he ; “ but this does not appear so great as all my other sins against God—cursing and swearing, and getting drunk. When I first began to reflect in my cell, I saw my sins so great that I felt I could not be forgiven. I was sitting down one day at my work in the prison, and the chaplain came along and asked me what was my crime, I told him.

“ ‘ That,’ said he, ‘ is one of the greatest crimes ; but then you may remember David’s sin, and he was forgiven. Let your crime be as great as it will, pray to God, and put your trust in him, and you shall find rest to your soul.’ ”

“ He told me also, that if I could not read, he would visit me in my cell, and put me in the way. I shall ever love him while God gives me breath ; I shall love the chaplain, for he put me in the way to obtain the salvation of my soul ; he made me promise him faithfully that I would go to God, and try to find mercy ; and yet, master, I had doubt in my heart—my sins were so heavy—whether I should be forgiven. The chaplain soon left me, and I went into my cell and poured out my heart to God to have mercy

William's mental suffering.

or me. The more I prayed the more miserable I grew. Heavier and heavier were my sins.

“The next day Mr. B. came to see me, and I asked him to read a chapter to me; and, as God would have it, he turned to the 55th chapter of Isaiah. It said, ‘Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy wine and milk without price.’ He read along to where the prophet says, ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’

“I found this gave me great encouragement to go on to pray, to see if I could find relief from all my troubles—the load of sin that was on my heart. I thought and prayed, and the more I prayed the more wretched I grew—the heavier my sins appeared to be.

“A night or two after that, the chaplain came to my cell and asked me how I felt. I told him my sins were greater than I could bear—so guilty—so heavy. He asked me if I thought praying would make my sins any less, I gave him no answer. He soon left me, and I went again to prayer. I was almost fit to expire. In all my sorrows I had not a right sorrow. My sorrow was because I had sinned *against man*.

“The Sunday following, just after I had carried my dinner into my cell, I put my dinner down, and went to prayer. I rose, and just as I rose from my prayer the chaplain was at the door. ‘We are all guilty creatures,’ he said to me, ‘and we can not be saved, except God, *for Christ's sake*, will save us. If we pray and go to God, we

His prayer.

His way of finding the 51st Psalm.

must go in the name of Jesus Christ ; if we expect to be saved, we must be saved through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.' Then I picked up encouragement.

" 'The sins which you have committed,' he went on, 'are against your fellow-creatures, but they are much more *against God*.' Now I never knew before that they were against God. When the chaplain left me, I went to prayer again. I could eat nothing that day. I did not eat a mouthful.

" I recollect at that time that a minister had told me, whenever I had a chapter read, to have the 51st Psalm. I could not see any body to get to read it, and how to find it I did not know, and the Sunday following, before the keeper unlocked the door, I rose up, and I went to prayer, and I prayed, ' O Lord, thou knowest I am ignorant, brought up in ignorance. Thou knowest my bringing up. Nothing is too hard for thee to do. May it please thee, O Lord, to show me that chapter, that I may read it with understanding.' I rose from prayer, and went to my Bible, and took it up. I began at the first Psalm, and turned over and counted every Psalm, and it appeared to me that God was with me, and I counted right to the 51st Psalm. I could read a little, and I began to spell H-a-v-e m-e-r-c-y, &c. ; I looked over the Psalm, and spelled it, and read it, and then put the Bible down, and fell upon my knees, and prayed : ' Have mercy upon me ; O God, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sins, for my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.'

" When I came to the words, ' Deliver me from blood-guiltiness,' I was struck dumb. I could not say any more at that time. I fell upon my knees, and prayed to God to have

His relief.

Close of the convicts' stories.

mercy upon me for Christ's sake. But I only grew more and more miserable. The load of my sins was heavier and heavier.

" All that I had ever done came plain and open in my sight, and I was led to see that I must perish ; there was no help for me ; all my sin was upon my own head."

Such is the miserable criminal's account of the suffering to which he was brought by the sense of guilt which the Bible was the means of fastening upon his soul. He continued in this state for some time, until at last, as he himself describes it, one day, when he was praying in his cell, his burden of guilt was removed. He felt that he might hope for pardon through Jesus Christ. The relief which this feeling brought over his mind seems to have been almost indescribable. Every thing wore a new aspect ; even the gloomy prison seemed a cheerful and happy place. His expressions of joy would appear almost extravagant to any person not sufficiently acquainted with the human mind, to understand how the whole aspect of external objects will be controlled by the emotions which reign in the heart. William concluded his narration in these words :

" And ever since that, master, this place where I have been confined, has been to me more like a palace than a prison—every thing goes agreeable. I find I have a deceitful heart, but Jesus tells me, if I lack knowledge, he will always lend, if I cast my care on Jesus, and not forget to pray. It is my prayer morning and evening, that I may hold out. If I die here, let me die, Lord, in thine arms. I have great reason to bless this institution, and every stone in it."

Now although it is not very common to obtain, in writing, accounts of changes of character among convicts so full and minute as this, yet the cases themselves are very common ; so common, that where a prison is regulated in such a manner

Charlestown state prison.

that the prisoners are not exposed to evil influence from each other, and the Bible has the opportunity to exert its power, the whole aspect of the prison is changed. After I had written the above, I was conversing upon the subject of this chapter with a gentleman much interested in the improvement of prisons, and he asked me if I had ever visited the prison at Charlestown, Massachusetts. I told him that I had not. "If you will go over with me, Sabbath morning," said he, "and visit the Sabbath School formed there, you will see the evidences of the moral power of the Bible far more distinctly than you can by any such single descriptions as these."

I of course gladly availed myself of the opportunity to accompany him. We walked accordingly on Sabbath morning, at the appointed hour, over one of those long bridges which connect the peninsula of Boston with the



TO CHARLESTOWN.

| Old building. | Crowded night rooms. | Arms. |
|--|----------------------|-------|
| main land. The prison is situated in Charlestown, on a point of land near the Charles river. The yard extends to the water's edge, to afford facilities for lading and un-lading the boats which transport stone ; hammering stone for building being the principal business at which the convicts are employed. | | |

When we reached the outer gate of the prison yard we pushed it open, and on closing itself after we had entered, it struck a bell, which gave notice to the keeper of the inner gate that some one was coming. This inner gate, made of strong iron bars, was opened for us, and we passed up the steps of a large stone building, through which lay our passage to the yard beyond. This building consists of one large central edifice, which was occupied by the family of the warden and by some of the keepers, and of two extensive wings. In these wings the prisoners were formerly confined, in rooms of moderate size ; many convicts however being lodged in one room. This was the old system of prison discipline, of which I have already spoken, and the prisoners almost invariably grew worse instead of better under it. A young man, perhaps, just beginning a career of vice, or overcome *for the first time* by some strong temptation, was placed during the long hours of the night in one of these crowded rooms. Of course he grew worse by such an exposure. Those who had grown old in sin instructed him in all their wicked arts. He became familiarized to infamy ; and even while under sentence for one crime, often formed plans for others, to be executed as soon as he should escape into society again. The consequence was, that these night rooms, in the wings of this great building, were, as they were often called, schools of vice and crime.

The first room we entered in this edifice seemed to be a sort of an office, and a row of swords and guns, which were arranged there ready to be used at a moment's notice, pro-

Prison yard.

Chapel.

claimed the intention of the keepers to resort to the most decided measures if the prisoners should make any attempt to escape. We passed through this room, and one or two others, every narrow passage being guarded by a formidable door of iron, which a turnkey opened and shut for us as we passed.

We entered a spacious and beautiful yard in the rear of this building. I say it was beautiful, because it struck the eye most pleasantly by its expression of neatness and industry. It was spacious, and extensive shops were arranged around it, in which the convicts were accustomed to work; and upon the smooth and level surface of the area inclosed, were many large and beautiful blocks of hammered granite, the fruits of the prisoners' industry.

We walked across the yard and came to a long stone building one story high, behind which rose another spacious edifice of stone. In this last were the prisoners' cells. I am not certain that I shall be able to convey to my young readers a very accurate idea of the arrangement and of the interior of these buildings, but I am very desirous of doing so, as it will give them clearer ideas of what I intend to present, in regard to the moral aspects of such an institution as this. Will you not then make an effort to picture distinctly to your minds what I am describing?

The long low building which I have mentioned, had a strong iron door in the center, and from that door a passage-way extended across to the great new prison beyond. On one side of this passage-way was a large room appropriated to preparing food for the prisoners, and on the other side was the chapel. When we came up to the iron door in the front of the building, we found several gentlemen, who had come over from Boston to act as teachers in the Sabbath School, waiting for admission. They were waiting until the prisoners themselves should have passed into the chapel; for

Prisoners going to Sabbath School. Aspect of the school. Prisoners' dress.

when we arrived, they were coming in a long procession from their cells in the rear, into this building, each one bringing the tin vessel from which he had eaten his breakfast, and laying it upon a sort of counter as he passed on into the chapel. We could see this by looking through an opening in the iron door.

When all the prisoners had gone into the chapel, the outer door was opened by a keeper, and we all passed in; the heavy door was swung to behind us, and its strong bolt secured. We turned from the entry into that end of the building which was used as a chapel. There was an aisle passing up the center, on each side of which were seats half filled with the convicts. The chaplain stood in a pulpit at the farther end, and on each side of him were the teachers, gentlemen from Boston, who had come to assist these unhappy men to read and to understand the word of God.

It was a most delightful May morning, and the whole aspect of the room, as I looked over it from my stand near the chaplain, was that of cheerfulness and happiness, not of gloom. The sun beamed in brightly at the windows, and the walls of the room, which were of the purest white, the neat benches, and the nicely sanded floor, gave a most pleasant aspect to the whole scene.

The congregation presented a singular and striking appearance. Had it not been for their dress I might have forgotten that I was in a prison. But they were all dressed in coarse clothes of two colors, one side of the body being red, and the other of some different hue. This is the uniform of crime. The object of it is, I suppose, not to mortify the men with a perpetual badge of disgrace, but only to put a public mark upon them, so that if any one should by any means escape, he might be immediately detected by the inhabitants of the country around.

“ Is it possible,” thought I, as I looked over this strange assembly, “ that all these men have come voluntarily this morning to read and study the word of God ? ” Yes, that was the fact. This exercise was entirely voluntary ; and out of two or three hundred who had been condemned for crime, about one half were accustomed to come thus, of their own accord, on Sabbath morning to study the book which proclaims from heaven free forgiveness of every sin.

The chaplain opened the school with prayer. He then explained to the teachers that the plan to be pursued was simply to hear the prisoners read the Bible, and explain its contents to them. He desired them to confine their conversation strictly to the business in hand, and requested the prisoners not to ask, and the teachers not to answer, any questions relating to other subjects. He then distributed the teachers around the room, giving each one a small class. Three convicts fell to my charge.

I opened almost at random in the New Testament, and let them read in rotation ; and more apparently humble and docile students of the Bible I never saw. They read slowly and with hesitation, and I thought at first, with a little embarrassment ; this however soon passed away, and it was most interesting to watch the eager expression upon their countenances as the various truths which were such glad tidings to them came in view. We came almost accidentally to the parables of the one sheep and the one piece of money which was lost, related in the fifteenth chapter of the gospel according to St. Luke. It seemed, in fact, as if the whole chapter was written expressly for prisoners.

One of these convicts, after expressing a strong interest in these parables, said that the Bible appeared like a very different book to him now, from what it did in former times.

“ How did it formerly appear to you ? ” asked I.

Conversation with a convict.

Power of the Bible.

“ O, I used to despise it. I used to wonder why so much was made of the Bible. It seemed to me that I could write as good a book myself.”

“ Well, are your views of it changed now ?”

“ O yes,” said he, “ I am now fully persuaded it is the word of God.”

“ What caused you to disbelieve it formerly ? was it the influence of bad company ?”

“ Why, sir, to be frank, it was ignorance. I had not studied it. I had read it a little here and there, but not attentively, or with a right spirit.”

“ What led you to change your views of it ?”

“ I did not change my views until I came to this institution. I had some days of solitary confinement when I first came, with no book but the Bible ; and when I first began to reflect, I recollect that a Christian family whom I once lived with, seemed to enjoy more real, substantial happiness than any other persons I ever saw ; and this led me to think there might possibly be something in religion. So I thought I would examine the Bible in earnest, and I found it a very different book from what I had supposed. I took a very strong interest in it, and at last a minister preached a sermon here from the text, ‘ What shall I do to inherit eternal life ?’ and that, I hope, led me to the Savior. I hope and trust that I have really given my heart to God.”

I told him that what he said gave me great pleasure, and that I hoped he would persevere in Christian duty, and find the Bible a source of happiness to him as long as he should live.

“ When I first came to this institution,” he replied, “ I thought it was rather a hard case to be shut up here so long. My time is, however, now almost out. In a few weeks I shall go away ; but if I have really been led to see and forsake my sins, I shall never have any reason to regret coming here ”

Reformation of prisoners.

Cases numerous.

Temperance sermon.

The chaplain about this time gave notice that it was time for the services to be closed, and I could not converse with my other scholars much. One of them told me, however, that he had been brought up by pious parents, and had read the Bible when he was a child. "It was, however," said he, "only to please my parents. I gave no heed to it. I have found it, since I came to this institution, a very different book."

I afterward learned that there was as much reason as, under the circumstances, there could be, to hope that all three of these criminals had really repented of sin, and obtained peace with God, and that they would return to society to be useful and happy while they live, and be admitted to heaven when they die. Such cases as these, too, are becoming very numerous in prisons, where the convicts are separated from each other, and brought under the influence of the word of God.

But I must proceed with the description of my visit: At the close of the Sabbath-school, the convicts who had attended it marched out, and presently returned with all the other prisoners in a long procession, to attend public worship; they filled the chapel. The preacher addressed them on the subject of temperance; and as he explained to them the nature of ardent spirit, and the consequences of its use, they listened with the most eager and uninterrupted attention. Each had his Bible under his arm—his only companion in his solitary cell—and it was evident, I thought, from the countenances of the whole assembly, that in the hour of stillness and solitude, it had been at work upon the conscience of many a hardened sinner there. It seemed impossible for a man to look upon that assembly, understanding their circumstances, and knowing how exclusively the Bible had been used as the means of restoring them to moral health, and how successful it had been, and yet doubt whether the book was really from God.

Marching to the cells.

Construction of the prison.

After the meeting was closed, the prisoners marched by divisions in regular order, each under the care of a keeper, back to the great building in the rear, which contained their cells. As they passed through the entry, each one took from the place where he had left it, the tin vessel containing his evening meal, and they walked in long procession to their silent and solitary lodgings. We followed them into the building. Its construction is peculiar; and as it is similar to those now very generally built for prisoners, I shall describe it.

It contains a building within a building—the outer one being a mere shell, consisting of walls and a roof, with rows of narrow, grated windows in the sides. The inner building is distinct and independent, with a passage several feet wide all around between it and the outer walls. This inner building is simply a block of cells, four or five stories high, arranged back to back, so that the doors open on each side into the passage-way I have already described. The doors, however, of the *lower story* only, can be entered from the floor of the passage-way itself, and to gain access to the others, long narrow galleries supported by iron pillars, project from each story. A staircase at one end leads the way to these.

There were no windows to the cells, except a grated opening in the narrow but heavy iron door; and this, it will be perceived, did not furnish an access to the open air, for the outer building entirely inclosed the inner one like a case. Sufficient light, however, found its way through the outer windows, and thence through the grated door, to cheer the prisoner a little in his solitude, and to allow him to read the pages of the word of God.

When we came into the passage-way below, the trains of prisoners were passing along the galleries, and entering, one after another, their respective cells. Each one closed after

The buildings.

Construction of the cells.

him the massive door, and there was something peculiarly solemn and impressive in the heavy sound, produced in regular succession, as door after door closed upon the unfortunate inmates. The keepers passed along after the prisoners of their respective divisions had entered their cells, and locked them in; and then, after the last party-colored dress had disappeared, and the last bolt sounded to its place, the keepers one after another returned, and all was silence and apparent solitude.

Though it was now the middle of a bright May afternoon, it was but twilight within these walls—the twilight of a prison—and so still, that one could hardly realize that within the sound of his voice more than two hundred criminals were confined. And yet they were within the sound of one voice; for the construction of these buildings is such, that every prisoner can hear the chaplain when conducting religious services in the passage-way. He stands there, not seeing an individual whom he addresses—nothing before him but the cold repulsive aspect of granite walls and floor, and pillars, doors, and locks of iron—and reads the chapter, and offers the evening prayer in the hearing of hundreds; and each prisoner, alone in his cell, seated upon his little bench, hears through the grated window the voice of one unseen, explaining to him the word of God, or guiding him in his supplications for the forgiveness of his sins, and preparation for heaven.

As we stood contemplating this scene, one of the officers of the prison standing there, said to my companion,

“ How different this is from what we used to see and hear in the old prison ! ”

“ Has there been,” asked I, “ a very decided change in the aspect of the prisoners since their removal to this building ? ”

“ O yes,” said he, “ every thing is changed. Why, when

Armed keeper.

The Bible the means.

they occupied the old building and were locked up, several together in a room, there was nothing but cursing and swearing, and riot, and quarreling, and blasphemy, to be heard all night. How they would rave against religion and the Bible and ministers! Nothing would have tempted me to have remained an officer in the prison if that state of things had continued. Now it is a quiet and peaceable family."

We ourselves came out last. A keeper, with a sword at his side and a pistol at his belt, closed and locked the door after us, and we passed through the yard, and through the great edifice which I first described, out beyond the prison walls, and returned to our homes.

Now if there was any one thing which stood forth to view in all this scene more distinctly and vividly than all the rest, it was that these effects were the work of the Bible. The very essence of the whole system is simply to cut off the bad influences which would otherwise gain access to the prisoner, and *lay before him the Bible*.

This was done with kindness and sympathy indeed, but still the word of God was most evidently the remedy which was applied. The prisoners came to their place of worship with their Bibles in their hands—the teachers in the Sabbath School confined their efforts to reading and explaining the sacred book—and it was affecting to observe,



SAFE KEEPING

Analysis of the convicts' stories.

1. Bible the means.

that as they went to their solitary cells, they found there the word of God for their only companion. So unquestionable is the moral power of this book, that the very authorities of the State, actuated by a desire to save the community from the injuries of wicked men, place a Bible, at the public expense, in the cell of every convict committed for crime.

Those little cells, so small that the narrow bed, when let down at night, leaves the prisoner scarce room to stand— destitute of almost every comfort, and showing by their whole aspect, that their design is to connect the most gloomy associations possible with the idea of crime—every one of those narrow and naked cells *must have its Bible*. Every legislator knows that that is the book to call back the guilty criminal from his sins. And though men may, in speculation,—when they wish to awaken conscience in the abandoned, and to recall them so far at least to duty that society may be safe from their crimes, they are unanimous in invoking its aid.

But I must return to the two convicts' stories. I did not intend to have digressed so far from them. My readers are requested to recall those narratives to mind, for I wish to analyze them a little, that I may present more distinctly the *nature of the process* by which convalescence and ultimate health returns to a sin-sick soul; for I wish to consider these not in the light of detached and separate instances, but as fair specimens of cases which are constantly occurring by tens of thousands in Christian lands.

I should like to have you notice the following points, which are brought to view by those narratives.

1. *The Bible was the means of the change.* One of the convicts said he had no proper views of the Scriptures till he came to the prison; the other could not read them at all:

and it was plainly by means of this book that they both were brought to understand their true characters. So at Charles-town. The whole plan relied upon for the moral reformation of these outcasts consisted simply in bringing the truths of the word of God before their minds. There was in one of the classes in the prison a convict who had been repeatedly imprisoned, having been confined once or twice in the old building. "And," said he, "it only made me worse. But now there is a new state of things. When I came to this prison, I found nothing but my Bible, and I believe it has made me a new man." The gentleman who had taught that class, said that this prisoner gave every evidence which could be given in so short a time, of being a humbled, renewed man.

2. *Men are led by the Bible to see that their sins are committed against God.* This you will perceive to be very strikingly the case, from a review of the convicts' stories. And this is one of the great peculiarities of the Scriptures. They lead us to see that we owe obligations to our Maker; a truth that is always neglected or forgotten till the Bible brings it to view.

But what is the meaning of our sins being against God? I once knew a boy so abandoned to evil passions, and so utterly destitute of moral principle, that he set fire to his mother's house, in a fit of anger with her for some reproof or punishment. I do not know whether he intended to burn it entirely, or whether he expected that the fire would be extinguished, and he should thus only frighten his mother. A great deal of injury was in fact done by the fire, though it was at last extinguished. Now the boy very probably supposed this offense was *against his mother alone*. He knew that he was responsible to her authority, and thought of nothing more.

How surprised then would he be if some friend of

His ignorance of the law of the land.

his, after he had done this, should converse with him ~~as~~ follows :

“ Do you know what you have done ? ”

“ Yes, I set my mother’s house on fire.”

“ And what do you expect will be the consequence ? ”

“ Why, perhaps she will punish me ; but I don’t care for that.”

“ I think you will find that that is not the worst of it.”

“ What is the worst of it ? ”

“ Why you have broken *the law of the land*, and I expect every hour that the officers will be after you to arrest you.”

“ The officers ! ” says the boy astonished and alarmed : “ I didn’t know any thing about the law of the land.”

“ There *is* a law of the land, you will find, and you have broken it, and they will have you tried and put in State’s Prison for it.”

At this the boy would perhaps pause and turn pale, and his next word would probably either be, “ I don’t believe it,” or else, “ What *shall* I do ? ” Perhaps he would attempt to excuse himself by saying,

“ I did not know that it was against any law—I only did it to plague my mother.”

“ That makes no difference,” his friend would reply, “ it will not help you at all. The law of every community is, and ought to be, very decided against incendiaries, because, as you well know, when you set fire to your mother’s house, you endangered the others near, and in fact the whole village. As to your not knowing that it was against the law, that makes no difference ; you *knew that it was wrong.*”

I do not know whether this boy learned that he had broken the law, and was in great danger of punishment, by any such conversation as the above. I know however that he learned it in some way, and he fled ; he escaped to a

Voice of the Bible.

distant city, but the officers found him there ; and I saw him afterward confined in his cell.

Now when men sin in this world they almost always forget the very important circumstance, that *they are sinning against God*. They look upon their offenses as committed solely against their fellow-men ; they feel sometimes a little compunction in regard to those few cases where their conduct has injured their fellows ; they never consider these as offenses against a far higher law ; and as to all their other conduct, they feel entirely at ease in regard to it.

Now the Bible comes in in such cases, and where its voice is heeded, it holds with men much such a conversation as that which I have described between the boy and his friend.

“Do you know,” it says to one who has been living an irreligious life for many years, “what you have been doing ?”

“Yes,” he replies, “I have very often done wrong. I have sometimes been idle and sometimes a little passionate ; but then I have endeavored to make up for lost time by subsequent industry, and I have always repaired all the injuries of every kind that I have done to others. On the whole, I have been a good neighbor and an honest man. I have been kind in my family, and upright as a citizen.”

“Ah !” says the Bible, “do you not know that *there is a God*, and that, by utterly neglecting him, you have been all the time unceasingly breaking *his law* ? You have been living for yourself, detached and separate from all around you, except so far as your interests or instinctive feelings have formed a frail tie. What a divided and miserable community would be the result, if all God’s creatures were to act upon the same principle !”

“Besides,” continues the word of God, “the sins of which you acknowledge that you have been guilty, and which you

3. Feeling awakened.

A slumbering sense of guilt.

seem to consider as committed chiefly against men, are in a far higher sense against God. They are violations of his law, and he has annexed a most awful penalty to such transgressions. In fact, it is possible that some of his officers are now sent for you, to summon you to trial and condemnation for your sins."

Thus men are led to see by the Bible *what law* they have broken, and what punishment they have to fear. The convict, whose conversation I have above given, saw, as he expresses it, that all his sins had been "*against God*."

3. *The Bible makes men FEEL their guilt.* Undoubtedly many of my readers will go over the explanation I have just given of our connection with God, and of the fact that all our sins are *against him*, very carelessly. They will not *realize the truth*, in its application to them. Nothing is more common than for persons to see ~~urd~~ to acknowledge the truths which I have been presenting, without feeling any compunction for their guilt. But the Bible arouses conscience; it is "*quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder the soul and spirit.*"

It is one of the most remarkable properties of the human mind, that a consciousness of guilt may remain a long time dormant in it—producing no uneasiness and no suffering—and yet, after the lapse of years, it will burst forth with most terrific power, and drive the victim of it to actual despair. This has often been the case. A man who has committed sin, is like one bitten by a mad dog. The momentary pain is slight—the wound soon heals; it may keep up from time to time a slight irritation, just enough to remind him occasionally of the occurrence; but ordinarily it is forgotten, and he goes on with his daily amusements and pleasures, entirely unconscious of danger.

But though the wound is healed, the dreadful infection

Sin will sting at last.

which it has admitted to his system, is circulating insidiously there. The poison glides imperceptibly along his veins and arteries for weeks, months, years. It does not mar his enjoyments, or disturb his repose; but still the dreadful enemy, though slumbering, is there. At last, in some unexpected hour, it rises upon him in all its strength, and overwhelms and conquers him entirely. It brings agony to his body and indescribable horror to his soul, and hurries him through the most furious paroxysms of madness and despair to inevitable death.

And it is just so with sin. A murderer, for example, will often slumber ten, twenty, or thirty years over his crime. The knowledge of it will be in his heart like a lurking poison, during all that time. He will recollect it without anxiety or compunction, and look forward to the future without alarm. At last, however, some circumstance, often apparently trifling, will awaken him; he will begin to feel his guilt; conscience will suddenly rise upon him like an armed man, and overwhelm him with all the horrors of remorse and despair. Perhaps, if one had tried a few weeks before to make him feel his guilt, it would have been in vain, he was so utterly hardened in it—so *dead* in trespasses and sins; but now you will find it far more difficult to allay or to mitigate the storm, which has, perhaps spontaneously, arisen.

Every person, therefore, who commits sin, takes a viper into his bosom—a viper, which may delay stinging him for many years—but *it will sting him at last*, unless it is removed. He may be unaware of the misery that awaits him—but it must come notwithstanding. This is particularly the case with sins against God; and the wonder is, that the sense of guilt will remain so entirely dormant as it often does, so that no warning, no expostulation, no remonstrance will disturb the death-like repose; and yet at last

the volcano will often burst forth spontaneously, or from some apparently trifling cause, and overwhelm the sinner in suffering.

Now we certainly should not wish that this suffering should come upon any individual, were it not that in a vast multitude of cases it leads him *to repent of and to forsake his sins*. Remorse is not penitence, it is true, but it very frequently conducts to it.

4. *The Bible leads men to a Savior.* Men everywhere have the impression that penitence is not enough to remove and expiate guilt. Whenever we do wrong, there is implanted, as it were in the very soul, a fearful looking forward to punishment to come in consequence of it. We know that no government can be efficiently maintained where its settled regular plan is to forgive always upon confession. Now it is found by universal experience—and the cases which I have narrated happily illustrate this—that when men are really brought to feel their sins against God, they can not be quieted by any general assurances that God is merciful. They know that he is merciful, but then they know too that he is *just*. They know that he is the great moral Governor of the universe ; and the youngest child, or the most ignorant savage, has an instinct, I might almost call it, which so assures him of the necessity of a retribution, that he can not rest, after a repeated disobedience, in the hope that his penitence alone will secure his pardon. Hence, in all unchristian countries men have various ways of doing penance, that is, inflicting severe voluntary suffering upon themselves by way of retribution for their sins. Now when men, under such circumstances, hear that a Savior has died for them, it brings relief. It is very often the case that there is not a very clear idea of the way in which his sufferings are of avail in opening the way for pardon ; in fact, it is not absolutely necessary that there should be very clear ideas on this

Forgiveness on mere penitence.Story of Regulus.

subject. The mind, however darkened and ignorant, is capable of seeing that these sufferings may in some way arrest the evil consequences of its sins, and open the way for pardon, and yet not fully understand in all their detail the various moral influences which the crucifixion of the Son of God is calculated to produce.

My reader, do you feel a secret but continual burden from a sense of your sins? Try the experiment of coming and asking forgiveness in the Savior's name, and see if it does not bring relief.

I suppose that most of my readers remember the story of Regulus. The ancient cities of Rome and Carthage stood opposite to each other, across the Mediterranean Sea. As these two cities grew up to power and distinction nearly together, they were the rivals and enemies of each other. There was many a hard-fought battle between their armies and their fleets.

At last, Regulus, a celebrated Roman general, was sent across the sea to carry the war if possible to the very gates of Carthage. He was at first very successful, and he took many prisoners and sent them to Rome. At length, however, the scale was turned, the Roman army was conquered, and Regulus himself was captured and thrown into a Carthaginian prison.

After some time had elapsed, the Carthaginians, foreseeing that the Roman power, notwithstanding their temporary successes, would in the end overwhelm their own, concluded to send an embassy to Rome to offer peace. They proposed to Regulus to go on this embassy. They intrusted to him the commission, saying to him, "We wish you to go to Rome and propose to your countrymen to make peace with us, and endeavor to persuade them to comply. If you do not succeed, however, we expect you to return to us again as our lawful prisoner. We shall confide in your word."

War between Rome and Carthage.Regulus as ambassador.

Regulus accepted the trust. He set off to Rome, promising to return to Carthage if the Romans should not accede to the peace. He sailed across the sea and up the Tiber, and was soon approaching the gates of the great city. He had determined, however, to do all in his power to prevent a peace, knowing that it would not be for the interest of his country to make one. He understood, therefore, that he was going to his native city only to communicate his message, and then to return to imprisonment, torture, and death, at Carthage.

His wife came out of the gates to meet him, rejoicing in his return. He received her, dejected, silent and sad. "I am a Carthaginian prisoner still," said he, "and must soon return to my chains."

He refused to enter the city. He had indeed a message for the senate, but the Roman senate was not accustomed to admit foreigners to their sessions within the city. He sent them word, therefore, that Regulus, no longer a Roman general, but a Carthaginian prisoner, was the bearer of a message to them, and wished them to hold, as usual, a meeting without the gates for the purpose of receiving it.

The senate came. They heard the proposal which the Carthaginians sent, and the arguments of Regulus against it. The arguments prevailed. They decided against peace, and Regulus began to speak of his return.

"Return!" said his friends, and the senators, and all the people of Rome; "you are under no obligation to return to Carthage."

"I *promised* to return," said Regulus, "and I must keep my word. I am well aware that the disappointed and exasperated Carthaginians will inflict upon me cruel tortures, but I am their prisoner still, and I must keep my word."

The Romans made every exertion in their power to persuade Regulus that a promise extorted under such circum-

Death of Regulus.

Cruel retaliation.

Supposed case.

stances was not binding, and that he could be under no obligations to return. But all was vain. He bade the senate, and his countrymen, and his wife farewell, and was soon sailing back to the land of his enemies. The Carthaginians were enraged at the result of his mission. They put him to death by the most cruel tortures.

When the tidings of his death came back to Rome, the senate and the people, who had already been much impressed by the patriotism of Regulus and his firm adherence to his word, were overwhelmed with admiration and gratitude. This feeling was mixed too with a strong desire for revenge upon the Carthaginians, and a decree was passed, giving up the Carthaginian prisoners then in their hands to Marcia, the wife of Regulus, to be disposed of as she might desire. She most unjustly and cruelly ordered them all to be put to death by the same sufferings which her lamented husband had endured.

My story, thus far, is substantially true. The dialogue I have given is intended to exhibit the substance of what was said, not the exact words. The facts, however, are correctly stated. The whole occurrence is matter of history.

In order, however, to make the use of this story which I have intended, I must now go on in fiction. I will suppose that Marcia, instead of desiring to gratify a revengeful spirit by destroying the lives of the innocent prisoners at Rome, in retaliation for the murder of her husband, had been actuated by a nobler spirit, and had sent such a message as this to the Roman senate, in reply to their proposal to her :

“ I do not wish for revenge. It will do no good, either to Regulus who is dead, or to his unhappy widow who survives, to torture or to destroy the miserable captives in our hands. Dispose of them as the good of the state requires. If you think, however, that any thing is due from the commonwealth to the memory of Regulus or to his surviving friends,

Forgiveness of criminals for Regulus' sake.

let it be paid in happiness, not in suffering. There are in the public prisons many miserable convicts condemned for their crimes ; let them be forgiven for Regulus' sake, if they will acknowledge their crimes and return to their duty."

A Roman senate would have undoubtedly granted such a request as this, if made under such circumstances as I have described. Let us suppose that they had done so, and that the prison doors had been opened, and the offers of pardon had been circulated among the convicts there.

Now I wish my reader to bear in mind that I am not in tending here to offer an illustration of the way in which our salvation is effected by the sufferings of the Son of God ; no analogy drawn from any earthly transactions, can fully illustrate the way in which the Lamb of God taketh away the sins of the world. My object is to illustrate the *spirit with which the offer of mercy through Him is to be received*, and I have made this supposition for the purpose of placing these prisoners in a situation *somewhat like* that of condemned sinners in this world, that I may show how the Bible brings relief to those suffering under the burden of sin, by offering them mercy through a Savior.

A messenger comes then, we will suppose, among the imprisoned malefactors, and announces the glad tidings that he brings to them—an offer of pardon from the Roman senate. The prisoners look incredulous. They know that the Roman government is an efficient one, and that it is accustomed to execute its laws. "We are justly imprisoned," they would say, "and our time is not yet expired. There can be no forgiveness for us till the law sets us free."

The messenger then relates to them, that in consequence of the distinguished services and subsequently cruel sufferings of a great Roman general, the senate had wished to make to his widow some public expression of the sympathy and gratitude of the commonwealth, and that she had asked it as a

Its effects in prison.

boon, that every penitent prisoner, willing to abandon his crimes and return to his duty, might be set free for her husband's sake.

Now unquestionably, if there were any among these prisoners who were really penitent for sin and willing to return to duty, their abhorrence of their crimes would be increased and their determination to be faithful citizens in future would be strengthened, by receiving such an offer of pardon. Nay, it would not be surprising if some who were still hardened in their sins, and even in the midst of noise and revelry in the prison at the very time the messenger appeared, should be arrested, and their feelings touched by such an address.

“ How different,” they might reflect, “ is the conduct of Regulus from ours ! We have been, by our vices and crimes bringing injuries without number upon our country. He, by his labors and sufferings, has been unceasingly endeavoring to do her good ; and Marcia, too—it was kind in her to think of us. When we were at liberty, we thought only of gratifying our own passions ; we made no effort to promote the happiness of others, or to diminish their sufferings ; we will return to our duty, and imitate the example they have set for us.”

It would not be surprising if such a transaction had awakened these reflections in some minds ; and on the whole, the effect of the offer of mercy through Jesus Christ produces very similar effects in the world, to those I have here imagined in the prison. When men are told in general terms, that God is merciful and will forgive their sins, it does not in ordinary cases really relieve them. Though perhaps they do not *say* it distinctly, yet they *feel* that God’s government, to be efficient, must have strict laws, and penalties strictly executed ; and they are afraid that a mere reliance on God’s general mercy may not be quite safe. Thousands trust to this till they come to their dying hour, and then abandon it.

The effects of the Gospel the same.The penitent convict.

But when men are told, by the word of God, that Jesus Christ died for them—the just for the unjust—and that they must come, asking forgiveness in his name and for his sake, it throws a different aspect over the whole case: a bright gleam of hope from a new and unexpected quarter darts in. Though they may not know fully *in what way* the sufferings of Christ may be the means of opening the way for their forgiveness, they still can see that it is very possible it may in some way do this. It is not necessary that we should understand fully the way. The convicts might be released without knowing all about the story of Regulus, or comprehending exactly how such a transaction as *their release on his account* would affect the public mind in Rome, so as to obviate the evil effects of laxity in the administration of public justice. There might be many a poor ignorant prisoner who could not comprehend such subjects at all, and yet who might possess *the spirit of mind* which should bring him most fully within the conditions of release. Such an one might come to the officer appointed for the purpose, and say,

“I am very grateful to the Roman senate for offering to pardon me for the sake of Regulus; I was really guilty of the crime for which I was sentenced, and the term of my imprisonment is not longer than I justly deserve; but I am glad to be restored to freedom and to happiness now. I shall always be grateful to the senate, and shall cherish the memory of Regulus as long as I live.”

Now, if a prisoner had this spirit, there is no question that he would be released, whether he was or was not statesman or philosopher enough to understand fully the moral character and influence of such a transaction. And so, my reader, if you are willing to acknowledge and to forsake your sins, and to accept of freedom and happiness in future, on account of another’s merits and sufferings, you need not distress yourself

The penitent sinner.

The prisoners.

because you do not *fully comprehend* the nature of that great transaction of which Gethsemane and Calvary were the scene. It can not be fully understood here. From the windows of our prison-house in this world, we can see but a small part of the great city of God. We can not appreciate fully any of the plans of his government ; we can, however, take the right position in respect to ourselves. We can ask forgiveness in Christ's name, and believe, on the authority of God's word, that God has set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for us, that we might be saved through faith in his blood—that is, by our trusting in his sufferings—that God might be *just*, and yet save those who trust in the Savior.*

But to return to the Roman prison. I have represented one prisoner as accepting the offer, and going out to freedom in consequence of it. Let us now suppose that the public officer, appointed by the senate to carry the message to the prisoners, and to receive their replies, should meet in one of the rooms a very different reception. He passes, we will suppose, along a dark passage-way, until he comes to the door of a gloomy dungeon ; the keeper removes the heavy rusty bars, and unbolts and unlocks the door, and as he opens it, he hears the unexpected sounds of mirth and revelry within.

As he enters, he sees the wretched-looking inmates lying around the cold stone floor upon their beds of straw. In a corner sit some with wild and haggard looks, relating to each other, with noisy but unnatural mirth, the profane jest or immoral story. In the middle of the room, two are quarreling for a morsel of food, which each claims, filling the air with their dreadful oaths and imprecations. Near the door lies a miserable object half covered in his tattered garment, and endeavoring in vain to get a little sleep. A small grated

* See Romans iii. 23-26.

The offer rejected.

window high in the wall admits a dim light, just sufficient to reveal to view the objects which compose this scene of vice and misery.

The quarrelers and the rioters pause a moment, each retaining his attitude, and listening while the messenger from the senate lays before them the offer of forgiveness and freedom. They gaze upon him for a few minutes with vacant looks, but before he has fairly finished his message, the angry combatants re-commence their war—the story-teller in the corner goes on with his narrative—the sleeper composes himself again to rest—and perhaps some fierce and angry-looking criminal comes up to the messenger and says, in a stern voice, “ Away ! you have no business here.”

Do you think that these prisoners would be liberated for the sake of Regulus ? No ! the bolts and bars must be closed upon them again, and they must bear their sentence to the full. And this is precisely the way in which multitudes receive the offers of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Once more. Suppose this messenger were to meet, in some part of the prison, one of the convicts walking back and forth alone in his cell, and should repeat to him the story which he was commissioned to bring.

“ Forgiveness for the sake of Regulus !” says he, with a tone of scorn ; “ I want no forgiveness on account of another ; you have no right to shut me up here for any thing that I have done ; it is unjust and cruel. I demand release on my own account—without any condition or any acknowledgment of my dependence for it upon the merits of another.”

Now, if the messenger should meet with the exhibition of such a spirit as this, he would turn away and close the bolts and bars of the prison again upon such a convict, and seek subjects of mercy elsewhere. God, too, requires of us all a humble and subdued spirit, and willingness to accept of pardon *in the name of Jesus Christ, who died for us.* We

Grateful acceptance of the offer.

Object of this illustration.

must come with the spirit which I first described—the spirit of the convict who said,

“I am grateful to the Roman senate for offering to pardon me for the sake of Regulus. I was really guilty of the crime for which I was sentenced, and the term of my imprisonment is not longer than I justly deserve. But I am glad to be restored to freedom and happiness now. I shall always be grateful to the senate, and shall cherish the memory of Regulus as long as I live.”

Before dismissing this illustration, I wish to remind my readers again, that I have been endeavoring to exhibit by it *the spirit of mind* with which we ought to receive the offer of mercy through Jesus Christ, not the *nature of the atonement* which he has made for sin. The case I have imagined could not safely occur in any human government, because there would be no way of ascertaining who among the convicts were truly penitent, and were really determined on leading a life of virtue in future. Several other difficulties, which in God’s government do not exist, are unavoidable in every human empire. *The spirit of mind* with which the offer of free forgiveness in Jesus’ name is welcomed or refused, is all which I design by this illustration to explain. If the heart is really ready to acknowledge its guilt, and willing to accept of pardon which it does not deserve, the offer of a Savior is most admirably calculated to restore peace of conscience, and heal the wounded spirit. And nothing but the Bible can make such an offer. Thus one of the most powerful means by which it changes character, is awakening the sensibilities of the heart, through the exhibition of a Savior crucified for our sins, and leading us to feel that we may be forgiven, and the obligation and authority of the law we have broken be yet sustained.

5. *These changes of character are often attended with strong excitement, and sometimes with mental delusion.* My

readers recollect that the first convict saw at one time a black coffin, according to his statement; and at another, he was addressed by an audible voice in his cell, assuring him that his sins were pardoned. These two circumstances were what chiefly induced me to insert that narrative, that I might bring up distinctly this point, namely, that the changes of character produced by the Bible are often attended with mental delusion in little things, especially among those minds that have been but little disciplined by philosophical thought. I could not have a fair specimen without including an example of this.

The human mind is so constituted, as all who have studied its nature are fully aware, that when any subject of great interest, or any strong emotion, takes possession of it, it operates immediately upon the body, producing sometimes animal excitement, and sometimes delusions of the senses. So that these very delusions, and this very bodily excitement, prove the greatness and the reality of the emotions of heart which have occasioned them. If a man becomes very much interested in any scheme, how likely he is to become enthusiastic in it! And this enthusiasm the public usually consider as *proving*, not *disproving*, his sincerity. It indicates the strength of the interest which he feels. It is astonishing what extravagances people will put up with from men engaged in the prosecution of favorite plans, and will consider them as pleasant indications of the strength of the interest which is felt. Brinley, a famous canal engineer, was so much interested in his favorite mode of transportation, that he used to express the opinion that a canal was far more valuable to a country than a navigable river. He was once asked what he supposed Providence intended in creating rivers. He said they were good for nothing but to feed canals. And this story has been copied by every biographer of Brinley: it has been told again and again, in lectures and

Cases of excitement

conversations and debates, as a pleasant instance of extravagance in a man devoted to a favorite pursuit, which proves nothing but the greatness of the interest he feels in it. Nobody ever thought the worse of Brinley for it, or distrusted his judgment on any point in the science of engineering. Millions were risked on his opinion while he was living, and his name is remembered with the highest respect. So Christians of uncultivated minds, will be sometimes extravagant in their opinions, or in their conduct, and only show by it the strength of the interest they feel.

A man who is inventing a machine, will become so excited that he can not sleep. He will perhaps, in his efforts to obtain repose, fall into an uncertain state, between sleeping and waking, in which, half in reverie and half in dream, fancy will present him with splendid images of success. He will hear a voice or see a figure, or he will be assured by some extraordinary mode that he shall overcome all his difficulties, if he will persevere. In the morning, light and the full possession of his faculties return, and as he is generally a man of intelligence, he can analyze the operations of his mind, and separate the false from the true. If he were an unenlightened man, however, and should in the morning tell his story, how narrow would be the philosophy which would say to him, "Sir, it is all a delusion. Your mind is evidently turned. You had better give up your invention, and return to other pursuits." It would be a great deal more wise to neglect altogether the story of supernatural voices and appearances which he might tell, and judge of the value of his proposed invention by examining impartially his plan itself, and calculating on sober evidence the probability of success or failure.

So, my reader, when you hear of any thing which you deem extravagance or delusion among Christians, remember how immense a change the beginning of a Christian course

Conversion a very great change.

sometimes is. The man has been all his life neglecting and disliking religion. He has been engrossed in sinful pursuits and pleasures, and perhaps addicted to open vice. All at once, while contemplating God's holy truth, his eyes are opened—he sees his guilt and his imminent danger of ruin. He is, and he must be, strongly excited. If he feels sensible of his condition in any proper degree, he can not sleep. Can an arrested malefactor sleep quietly the first night in his cell? He must be strongly excited, and this excitement must, in many cases, bring something like temporary mental delusion. He must do and say many things in which the calm spectators can not sympathize. But it is most certainly very unphilosophical to fasten upon these things, and infer from them that all is delusion. The real question to be considered is this: *Is a bad character really changed for a good one?* If so, it is a great moral change, invaluable in its nature and results, productive of inconceivable good to the individual himself, and to all connected with him. The excess of feeling is momentary and harmless. In regard to the permanency of the change in the case of those convicts, there is one whose subsequent character I have no means of knowing. The other, however, when he was liberated, became a useful and respectable citizen; and after sustaining uninjured for two or three years the temptations of the world, he was admitted to a Christian church; and up to the latest accounts which I have been able to obtain, he was a most trustworthy man and an exemplary Christian. An abandoned profligate, imprisoned for his crimes, becomes a useful and a virtuous man. Can you expect such a change without excitement? How unphilosophical then is it to fasten upon the slight and momentary indications of excitement, as evidence that there is nothing real in the case!

And yet, unphilosophical as this is, I have no doubt that there are many persons whose eyes, if they were reading

Narrow views.Danger on both sides.

the first convict's story, would catch at once the accounts of the supernatural appearances which he thought he saw, and they would stop short there. "Ah!" they would say, "he heard a voice forgiving his sins—he saw a black coffin! It is all fanaticism and delusion." This is narrow-mindedness. The intellect which reasons thus, is in such a state that it does not take a survey of *the whole* of a subject presented, so as to form an independent and unbiased opinion. The man fastens upon one little blemish which happens to be turned toward him, and seeing no farther, he condemns the whole. Like the inexperienced mariner who thinks he has come to a barren and inhospitable land, because he sees nothing but precipitous rocks or sandy beaches on the shore which first comes to view.

There is, however, a narrow-mindedness which may operate in another way. Many a sincere Christian will read such an account and be perfectly satisfied, because he meets with a few expressions of penitence, that the convict's heart is really changed. He thinks the criminal has certainly become a Christian, just because *he talks like one*. Whereas it is very possible that he is only repeating language which he has heard others use, for the sake of exciting sympathy, or pretending to be reformed, in hope of pardon and release from his cell. Now, it is as narrow-minded to judge from a very partial knowledge of facts in one way as in another. An experienced Christian can indeed often form a tolerably safe opinion of the reality or fictitiousness of a pretended change, by conversation; but the great decisive evidence after all is *perseverance in a holy life*.

If then men who have been abandoned to vice become virtuous and trustworthy citizens, and exemplify for years the graces of the Christian character, we will bear with a little excitement, and even enthusiasm, at the time of the change. For it is, after all, of comparatively little conse-

quence whether this excitement shows itself by some open manifestation, as by the black coffin rising to the disturbed imagination of the convict in his cell, or the loud shout, "Glory to God," which resounds in the camp-meeting; or whether it is subdued and restrained, as in the still solemnity of an inquiry meeting on the evening of the Sabbath, or in the solitary suffering of an awakened sinner mourning at midnight the burden of his sins. Remember that I say it is of *little* consequence. Not that it is of none. It would be better if men would follow Jesus as readily and as easily as Matthew did. Jesus said unto him, "Arise and follow me; and he arose and followed him." Immediate submission, with cordial confidence in the Savior, will at once remove all mental suffering and all cause for it. But if men will only give up their sins and lead lives of actual piety, we will not quarrel with them about the manner in which they enter the new way.

Such then are some of the effects of the Bible upon the human character considered in detail. I have thought it best, in order to show the moral power of this book as distinctly as possible, to analyze thus minutely the operation of it in some particular cases. But the argument would be very deficient if I should leave it here; for if these cases were *uncommon*, they would prove but little. But they are not *uncommon*. Even in prisons, a very large number of such cases have, as I have already stated, occurred; and the subjects of such changes have gone, when they have been liberated, in peace and happiness to their homes. There are now scattered over our land vast numbers who have been brought, from every stage and degree of guilt, to seek pardon through the Savior, and to begin a life of virtue and piety. The influence of the Bible, too, upon the community at large is so great, that every country where it freely circulates is

Limited circulation of the Biblo.

Fear of death.

distinguished for the peace which reigns there. Vice is comparatively unknown, property and life are safe, every man sits under his own vine and fig-tree, with none to molest or make him afraid. But when man is left to himself, he makes his home a den of robbers. If you travel on the Nile or the Tigris, you must look well to your means of defense. Men must go in caravans in all those regions, for mutual protection. But how would an armed escort for a traveler appear on the banks of the Connecticut or the Hudson?

And yet though benefits so great are procured to society by the Bible, they are procured, after all, only by a limited application of its moral power. It is a very small proportion of the whole population, even in the United States, which attends at all to the commands and instructions of the word of God. The numbers are however rapidly increasing. The cause of God is advancing with great rapidity; and as a military despotism or a Christian republic must be the ultimate destiny of every nation, we can look only to the spread of the influence of the Bible to save our country from ruin.

I will close this chapter by mentioning one more instance of the moral power of the Bible—it is its effect in destroying the fear of death. The fear of death is *instinctive*, not founded on reasoning. It is reasonable for us to fear some things connected with death, but the chief apprehension which every man feels in looking forward to his last hour, is the result of an instinctive principle, which Providence has implanted in every man's mind; and the only way by which it can be counteracted without the Bible, is by banishing the subject from his thoughts. That is the way that soldiers acquire courage in battle—by accustoming themselves not to think of death at all. It is not in human nature to contemplate its approach, habitually and calmly, without such a preparation as the Bible gives.

The sick young man.

Sting of death.

The dying mother.

Come in imagination to this sick chamber. That young man tossing restlessly upon his pillow is soon to die. His physicians have given him over. His friends despair, but by a most absurd and preposterous species of kindness, they will not tell him of his danger, for they know he is unprepared to die, and the knowledge of the approach of the dread hour they think will distress him! But the sad secret they can not conceal; he reads his sentence in their anxious looks and agitated words; his pale cheek turns paler with fear, and to the natural restlessness of disease, there is added the overwhelming agitation of mental anguish. Can you soothe him? Can you calm him? Your very effort reveals to him his danger more distinctly, and his heart sinks within him in hopeless terror. Sometimes, it is true, this fear of death does not reign in the heart at the closing hour, for reason may be gone, or the soul may sink into stupor. But when death is really foreseen and known to be near, while the faculties retain their power, the expectation of it weighs down the human spirit with overwhelming fears.

But the Bible assures us that the sting of death is sin, and promises that Christ will give believers the victory over it. This promise is most faithfully observed. See that dying Christian mother. She knows that death is near, and has calmly made her arrangements for the closing scene. She is a Christian, and looks forward to an entrance into the world of spirits with no foreboding and no anxiety. Her husband, and children, and friends, stand in agitation and distress around her bedside, but *she is calm*. A Christian death-bed very often exhibits the astonishing spectacle of composure and happiness in the one who is to drink the cup, while those around, who are only witnesses of the scene, are overwhelmed with agitation and sorrow. The very one who is to encounter the suffering, is the only one who can look forward to it without fear. It is because the Bible has been shedding its influ-

ence upon her heart, and by a moral power, which no other means can exert, has disarmed death, the very king of terrors, and given to a weak and suffering mortal the victory over all his power.

But I must close this chapter, and with it close the short and simple view I have been endeavoring to give of the evidences of Christianity. I can not but hope that my readers see evidences enough to satisfy them that the Bible is really the word of God. If you do, lay up the conviction in your heart, and let it guide and influence you. But let me, before I dismiss the subject, give you two or three short practical directions.

1. Do not think there is no other side to this question. There are a great many things which may be said against the Bible, and some things which you, with your present attainments in Christian knowledge, perhaps can not answer. *But they do not touch or affect the great arguments by which the authority of the Bible is sustained.* They are all *small, detached* difficulties. Then let your mind rest calmly and with confidence upon the great but simple arguments on which the strong foundations of your belief stand.

2. Never be inclined to disputed upon the evidences of the Christian religion. The difficulty with unbelievers is one of the *heart*, not of the *intellect*, and you can not alter the heart by disputing. When they present you with arguments against Christianity, reply in substance, "What you say seems plausible; still it does not reach the broad and deep foundations upon which, in my view, Christianity rests; and consequently, notwithstanding what you say, I shall still place confidence in the word of God."

3. Notice this, which, if you will watch your own experience, you will find to be true. Your confidence in the word of God and in the truths of religion will be almost exactly proportional to the fidelity with which you *do your duty*. When

Doing duty.

you lose your interest in your progress in piety, neglect prayer, and wander into sin, then you will begin to be in darkness and doubt. If you are so unhappy as to get into such a state, do not waste your time in trying to *reason yourself* back to belief again. *Return to duty.* Come to God and confess your wanderings, and submit your heart again wholly to him. If you do this, light for the intellect and peace for the heart will come back together.

CHAPTER VIII.

STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

“Able to make us wise unto salvation.”

IT is not my intention in this chapter to give any description of the Bible itself, or of its history since it came into the world ; nor shall I endeavor to establish its divine authority, or present the evidences or the nature of its inspiration. My object is to point out practical duty, and I shall confine myself to a description of the best methods of reading and studying the book.

I ought, however, to remark at the outset, that I intend the chapter to be of a highly practical character, and I shall go accordingly into minute detail. Besides, I am writing for the young, and shall, as I have generally done in this book, confine myself chiefly to them, for I have much more hope that they will be influenced to follow the course which I shall endeavor to describe, than that my efforts will produce any good effect upon those who have gone beyond the meridian of life. If a man has passed the age of thirty without the Bible, it is to be feared that he will go on unaided by its light through the remainder of his pilgrimage. It is different, however, with the young. You shrink from passing life in impiety. You know that the Bible can be the only safe lamp to your feet ; and if you are not already living by its light, there is hope that you may be persuaded to come and give yourself up to its guidance now.

Way to study the Bible.

There should be a distinction made between the manner of reading the Bible on the Sabbath, and during the bustle of the week. The two objects to be accomplished, and the method of accomplishing them I shall describe.

On the Sabbath the Bible should be *studied*. Every person, old or young, ignorant or learned, should devote a portion of time every Sabbath to the *study* of the Scriptures, in the more strict and proper sense of that term. But to show precisely what I mean by this weekly study of the Bible, I will describe a particular case. A young man with only such opportunities as are possessed by all, resolves to take this course; he selects the epistle to the Ephesians for his first subject; he obtains such books and helps as he finds in his own family, or as he can obtain from a religious friend, or procure from a Sabbath-school library. It is not too much to suppose that he will have a sacred Atlas, some Commentary, and probably a Bible Dictionary. He should also have pen, ink and paper; and thus provided, he sits down Sabbath morning to his work. He raises a short but heartfelt prayer to God that he will assist and bless him, and then commences his inquiries.

The Epistle to the Ephesians I have supposed to be his subject. He sees that the first question evidently is, “*Who were the Ephesians?*” He finds the city of Ephesus upon the map; and from the preface to the Epistle contained in the commentary, or from any other source to which he can have access, he learns what sort of a city it was, what was the character of the inhabitants, and if possible, what condition the city was in at the time this letter was written. He next inquires in regard to the writer of this letter or Epistle, as it is called. It was Paul; and what did Paul know of the Ephesians? had he ever been there? or was he writing to strangers? To settle these points, so evidently important to a correct understanding of the letter, he ex-

The young man's experiment.

amines the Acts of the Apostles, in which the account of St. Paul's labors is contained, to learn whether Paul went there, and if so, what happened while he was there. He finds that many interesting incidents occurred during Paul's visits to Ephesus, and his curiosity is excited to know whether these things will be alluded to in the letter; he also endeavors to ascertain where Paul was when he wrote the letter. After having thus determined every thing relating to the circumstances of the case, he is prepared to come to the Epistle itself, and to enter with spirit and interest into an examination of its contents.

He first glances his eye cursorily through the chapters of the book, that he may take in at once a general view of its object and design—perhaps he makes out a brief list of the topics discussed, and thus has a distinct general idea of the whole before he enters into a minute examination of the parts. This minute examination he comes to at last—though perhaps the time devoted to the study for *two or three* Sabbaths is spent in the preparatory inquiries. If it is so, it is time well spent; for by it he is now prepared to enter with interest into the very soul and spirit of the letter. While he was ignorant of these points, his knowledge of the Epistle itself must have been very vague and superficial. Suppose I were now to introduce into this book a letter, and should begin at once, without saying by whom the letter was written, or to whom it was addressed. It would be preposterous. If I wished to excite your interest, I should describe particularly the parties, and the circumstances which produced the letter originally. And yet how many Christians there are, who could not tell whether Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written before or after he went there, or where Titus was when Paul wrote to him, or for what special purpose he wrote!

Take another case. The father or mother whom Provi-

dence has placed at the head of a family, contrive to close their worldly business at an early hour on Saturday evening, and gather around the table at their fireside all those who are committed to their charge. They choose some subject for examination—real, thorough examination. Perhaps it is the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the captivity. The various books calculated to assist their inquiries are distributed among the members of the group ; the reference Bible is given to one, the Concordance to another, an Expositor to the third, the Bible Dictionary to the fourth ; and then, when all are seated, and the divine blessing has been invoked upon their labors, the father asks them all to turn to any part of the Scriptures which gives information upon the subject. They examine first the account of the destruction of the city, when the Jews were carried captive, that they may know in what condition it was probably found on their return. They search in several books for an account of the first movements in Babylon of those who were desirous of return ; they examine the plans which they formed ; compare one account with another ; every question which occurs is asked, and the information which it seeks for, obtained. The two expeditions of Ezra and Nehemiah are examined—the object of each and the connection between them. Under the control of a judicious parent, even secular history might be occasionally referred to, to throw light upon the subject. We may properly avail ourselves of any helps of this kind, so far as their tendency is really to throw light upon the sacred volume. The children of the family soon take a strong interest in the study ; their inquiries are encouraged, their curiosity is awakened ; they regard it a pleasure, not a task. Instead of the evening of Saturday, the afternoon or evening of the Sabbath, if more convenient, may be used ; and if the children are members of a Sabbath School, their next lesson may be the subject. Those accustomed to the use of the pen will

Interest of the children.

Of all.

derive great advantage from writing, each evening, notes or abstracts, expressing in a concise and simple style, the new knowledge they have acquired ; and every difficulty should be noted, that it may be presented at a convenient opportunity to some other Christian student, to the superintendent of the Sabbath School, or to a minister of the Gospel.

This method of studying the Scriptures, which I have thus attempted to describe, and which I might illustrate by supposing many other cases, is not intended for one class alone ; not for the ignorant peculiarly, nor for the wise ; not for the rich, nor for the poor ; but for all. The solitary widow, in her lonely cottage among the distant mountains, with nothing but her simple Bible in her hand, by the light of her evening fire, may pursue this course of comparing Scripture with Scripture, and entering into the spirit of sacred story, throwing herself back to ancient times, and thus preparing herself to grasp more completely, and to feel more vividly the moral lessons which the Bible is mainly intended to teach. And the most cultivated scholar may pursue this course in his quiet study, surrounded by all the helps to a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures which learning can procure or wealth obtain.

I hope the specimens which I have given are sufficient to convey to my readers the general idea that I have in view, when I speak of *studying* the Bible, in contradistinction from the mere cursory reading of it, which is so common among Christians. But I must illustrate in minute detail the various methods of doing this ; for there are many persons who really wish to study the Bible more intellectually, and to receive more vivid impressions from it, but who do not exactly know what they are to do to secure these objects. I shall therefore describe some of the means which can easily be adopted, and which if adopted will be found very efficient for this purpose.

Particular directions.

Familiar sounds.

1. *Picturing to the imagination the scenes described.* There is a very common difficulty felt by multitudes in reading the Bible, which admits of so sure and easy a remedy by the above direction, that I can not avoid devoting a few paragraphs to the formal consideration of it.

A person who is convinced that it is his duty to read the word of God, and who really desires to read it, and to receive instruction from it, sits down on the Sabbath to the work. He opens perhaps to a passage in the Gospels, and reads on, verse after verse. The phraseology is all perfectly familiar to him. He has read the same passage a hundred times before, and the words fall upon his ear without life or meaning, and produce no impression upon his mind. After going through a few verses in this way, he finds that he is making no progress; perhaps his mind has left his work altogether, and is wandering to some other subject. He begins back therefore a few verses, and endeavors to become interested in the narrative; but it is to little purpose; and after spending half an hour in the attempt, he shuts his book, and instead of feeling that renewed moral strength, and the peace of mind which comes from a proper use of the word of God, he feels disappointed and dissatisfied, and returns to his other duties more unquiet in spirit than before. What a vast proportion of the reading of the Bible, as practiced in Christian countries, does this description justly portray.

Now some one may say that this careless and useless study of God's word arises from a cold and indifferent state of heart toward God. It does unquestionably often arise, in a great degree, from this source, but not entirely. There is another difficulty not connected with the moral state of the heart. It is this:

Words that have been often repeated gradually lose their power to awaken vivid ideas in the mind. The clock which

The motto in the school-room.

Description from the Bible.

has struck perhaps many thousand times in your room, you at last cease even to hear. On the walls of a school-room there was once painted in large letters, "A PLACE FOR EVERY THING, AND EVERY THING IN ITS PLACE;" but after a little time the pupils, becoming familiar with the sight of the inscription, lost altogether its meaning; and a boy would open his disorderly desk and look among the confused mass of books, slates, and papers there, for some article he had lost, and then as he looked around the room, his eyes would fall on the conspicuous motto, without thinking a moment of the incongruity between its excellent precept and his own disorderly practice. It is always so. The oft-repeated sound falls at last powerless and unheeded on the ear.

The difficulty then that I am now to consider, is, that in reading the Bible, especially those portions which are familiar, we content ourselves with merely *repeating the words once more*, instead of penetrating fully to the meaning beyond. In order to illustrate this difficulty and its remedy more fully, let me take a passage, the sixth chapter of St. John for example, to which I have opened at random.

"After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased."

How familiar, now, this sounds to every reader. Every phrase comes upon the ear like an oft-told tale, but it makes a very slight impression upon the mind. The next verse, though perhaps few of my readers know now what it is, will sound equally familiar when they read it here.

"And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples."

Now suppose that this passage and the verses which

Vivid conceptions.

The sea of Galilee.

follow it were read at morning prayer by the master of a family ; how many of the children would hear it without being interested in it, or receiving any clear and vivid ideas from the description. And how many would there be who, if they were asked two hours afterward what had been read that morning, would be utterly unable to tell. .

But now suppose that this same father could, by some magic power, show to his children *the real scene* which these verses describe. Suppose that he could go back through the eighteen hundred years which have elapsed since these events occurred, and taking his family to some elevation in the romantic scenery of Palestine, from which they might overlook the country of Galilee, actually show them all that this chapter describes.

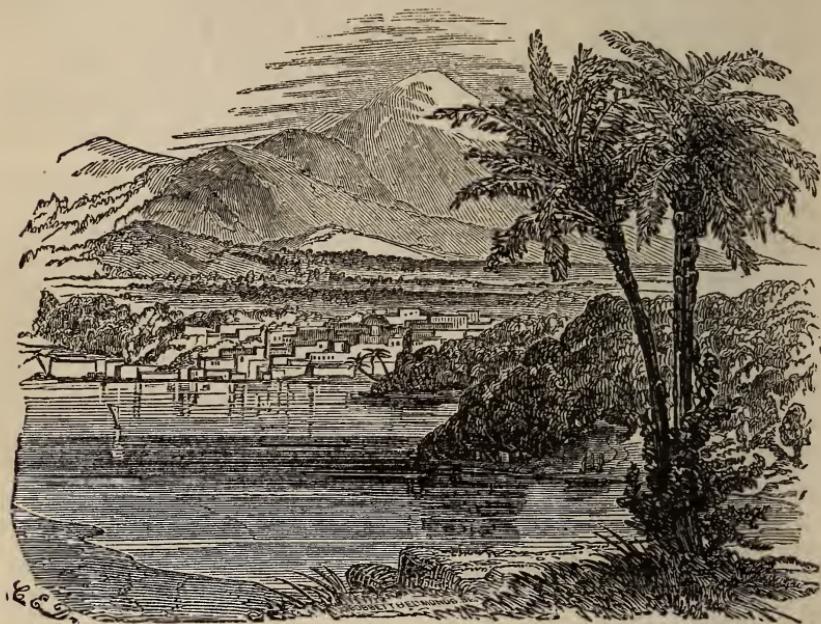
“ Do you see,” he might say, “ that wide sea which spreads out beneath us, and occupies the whole extent of the valley ? That is the sea of Tiberias ; it is also called the sea of Galilee. All this country which spreads around it is Galilee. Those distant mountains are in Galilee, and that beautiful wood which skirts the shore is a Galilean forest.”

“ Why is it called the sea of Tiberias ?” a child might ask.

“ Do you see at the foot of that hill, on the opposite shore of the lake, a small town ? It extends along the margin of the water for a considerable distance. That is Tiberias, and the lake sometimes takes its name.”

“ But look—there is a small boat coming round a point of and which juts out beautifully from this side of the lake. It is slowly making its way across the water—we can almost hear the dashing of the oars. It contains the Savior and some of his disciples. They are steering toward Tiberias—now they approach the beach ; they stop at the landing, and the Savior, followed by his disciples, walks up the pathway on the shore.”

The Savior and the sick.



THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

Suppose now that this party of observers can remain a little longer at their post, and see in a short time that some sick person is brought to the Savior to be healed. Another and another comes. A crowd gradually collects around him. He retreats slowly up the rising ground, and after a little time he is seen to take his place upon an elevated spot, where he can overlook and address the throng which has assembled near.

If this could be done, how strong and how lasting an impression would be made upon those minds! Years, and perhaps the whole of life itself, would not obliterate it. Even this faint description, though it brings nothing new to the mind, will probably make a much stronger and more lasting impression than merely reading the narration would do. And what is the reason? How is it that what

Picturing the scene to the mind.

I have here said has impressed this scene upon your minds more distinctly than the simple language of the Bible? Why, it is only because I have endeavored to lead you to *picture this scene to your minds*—to conceive of it strongly and clearly. Now any person can do this for himself in regard to any passage of Scripture. It is not necessary that I should go on and delineate in this manner the whole of the account. Each reader can, if he will task his imagination, paint *for himself* the scenes which the Bible describes. And if he does thus bring his intellect and his powers of conception to the work, and read, not merely to repeat, formally and coldly, sounds already familiar, but to bring to his mind vivid and clear conceptions of all which is represented there, he will be interested. He will find new and striking scenes coming up continually to view, and will be surprised at the novelty and interest which this simple and easy efforts will throw over those very portions of the Bible to which the ear has become most completely familiar.

I wish now that every one of my readers would really try this experiment. It will do very little good merely to read the foregoing directions, and resolve generally to endeavor in future to form vivid and clear conceptions of what is described when you are reading; you must make *a particular effort to learn* to do this. Now the next time you sit down to reading the Bible, turn to the fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, and picture to yourself as vividly as possible the scene described there. Do not think of a shore in general, but conceive of some particular shore. Give it shape and form. Let it be rocky or sandy, or high or low, bordered with woods, or with hills, or with meadows. Let it be something distinct. You may, if you please, conceive it to be a long sandy beach, with a lofty bank and verdant field behind; or you may have it an open wood, sloping gradually

Clear conceptions.

West's picture of Christ rejected.

down to the water's edge ; or a rocky, irregular coast, full of indentations ; or a deep and narrow bay, whose shores are overhung with willows. Let it assume either of these forms, or any other which your fancy may portray, and which may suit the circumstances of your narrative ; only let it be *something distinct*—clear and distinct in all its parts ; so that if you had power to represent upon canvas the conceptions of your mind, by painting, you might execute a perfect picture of the whole scene.

To do this properly will require time and thought. You must be alone or at least uninterrupted, and your first effort will be a difficult one. The power of forming clear and vivid conceptions of this kind varies greatly in different individuals. The faculty can, however, be cultivated and strengthened by exercise. Historical painters, that is, painters of historical scenes, are enabled to produce very great effects by the possession of this power. West, for example, formed in his own mind a clear, and vivid, and interesting conception of the scene which was exhibited when the crowd of angry Jews rejected the Savior and called for his crucifixion. He painted this scene, and the great picture which he has thus produced has been gazed at with intense interest by many thousands.

I saw this picture in the gallery of the Athenæum at Boston. The gallery is a large and lofty apartment, lighted by windows above, and containing seats for hundreds. As I came up the stairs which lead into the room, and stepped from them upon the floor of the apartment, I found a large company assembled. The picture, which was, as I should suppose, ten or fifteen feet long, stood against one side of the apartment, and before it, arranged upon the seats, were the assembled spectators, who were gazing with intense interest, and almost in perfect silence, upon the scene. As we came forward before the canvas we felt the same solemn impres-

Effect upon the assembly.

Writing questions.

sion which had silenced the others, and it was interesting and affecting to observe, as party after party came up the stairs, talking with usual freedom, that their voices gradually died away, and they stood silent and subdued before the picture of the Savior.

Yes; there stood the Savior in the middle of the picture, passive and resigned, and with a countenance whose expression plainly said that his thoughts were far away. The Roman governor stood before his palace endeavoring to persuade the mob to consent to their prisoner's release. The uncovered and hard-featured soldiery sat at his feet upon the cross which they had been carrying, and were holding in their hands the spikes with which the limbs of the innocent one before them were to be pierced. All the other attendant circumstances were most vividly and strikingly represented. The mob were there, with fury and rage and hate in every variety upon their countenances. Barabbas was there, with his look of hardened and unsubdued guilt—and the centurion's little daughter, whose life Jesus had saved, stood by her father, apparently entreating him to interpose his power to rescue her preserver.

Now West must have possessed, in order to succeed in executing such a work, the power, first, of forming a clear mental conception of the scene, and secondly, of representing this scene by colors on the canvas. The former of these only is the one necessary for the object that I have above described, and you ought, while reading accounts of Scripture scenes, to form as vivid and distinct conceptions of the scenes described as if you were actually intending to represent them by the pencil.

2. *Writing questions.* A young man, with pen and paper before him, sits down, I will suppose, to the examination of some portion of the Bible, intending to write questions upon the passage, such as he would ask if he were preparing to

God's command to Abraham.

Questions upon the passage.

examine a class in a Sabbath School. Suppose he opens to the account of Abraham's offering Isaac.

The following is the passage; I copy it, that the reader may the better understand the questions.

1. And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am.

2. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up and went into the place of which God had told him.

4. Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.

5: And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass: and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

He reads this narrative carefully, verse by verse, and writes a question for every important fact stated. Perhaps the questions might be somewhat as follows. The reader, in examining them, is particularly requested to compare the questions, one by one, with the verses in which the answers are contained. I ought also to remark, that I do not offer these as examples of good questions, but only as a specimen of such as I suppose most young persons would write.

1. To what land did God command Abraham to go to offer up his son?
2. How was he to be offered?
3. Was he to be offered on a mountain?
4. How did Abraham travel?
5. What time did he set out?

Utility of writing questions.

6. How many attendants had he ?
7. How long a journey was it ?
8. What is stated in the 5th verse ?

I have written these questions as I imagine they might be ; written by any intelligent young person. Some of them are however evidently not good. A *leading* question ought not to be asked, that is, one so written as to imply what the answer is ; nor ought it to be so written that the answer should be simply "Yes," or "No." No. 3 of the above is a *leading* question. No. 8, too, is not a good question. It is not important that one should remember what is said in any particular verse. It would have been better in such a form as this :

8. What arrangement was made after they arrived at the mountain ?

If any person will attempt the writing of questions in this manner, he will find it one of the most efficient means that he can possibly devise, of fixing upon his mind the facts contained in any portion of history. In order to make out the question, you look at the fact in various aspects and relations ; all its connections are considered, and the mind becomes thoroughly familiarized with it. For you will find, after a very little practice, that the same fact may be made the subject of a great number of different questions ; and to look at these with a view of selecting the best, is a most valuable intellectual exercise. Take, for instance, the very questions I have already spoken of, particularly No. 8. See how many different questions, or rather in how many forms the same questions can be asked, some bad and some good, upon the single verse to which it relates. In order to understand them, and be enabled to judge of their character, the reader should refer to the passage itself, and compare the questions with the statements made in the last verse of the narrative.

Many questions upon one verse.

Good and bad questions.

1. What did Abraham say to the young men when he reached the mountain ?
2. What plan did Abraham form when he reached the mountain ?
3. Did all the party go together to the place where Isaac was to be offered ?
4. How was the party divided when they reached the mountain ?
5. How many persons went with Abraham to the place of sacrifice ?
6. When Abraham went with Isaac alone to the place of sacrifice, what did he say that he was going for ?
7. When Abraham left the young men behind, to go with Isaac alone to the place of sacrifice, what did he say that he was going to do ?
8. What did he tell them that he was going to do ? Was this the truth ? Was it the whole truth ? Are we always bound to tell the whole truth ?

The reader will thus see that one and the same fact may be viewed in so many aspects and relations as to suggest a very large number of questions. After a very little practice, several questions will accordingly suggest themselves at each verse to any individual who attempts the exercise. He will consider which to choose. He will, in thus considering, necessarily view the recorded fact under its various aspects, and acquire a far more thorough and permanent knowledge of it than is possible to obtain from any cursory reading. So great is the advantage of this method of writing questions upon any book which the pupil desires thoroughly to understand, that it is not unfrequently adopted in schools—each pupil of a class being required to write questions upon a part or upon the whole of a lesson, which questions are then read and answered at the recitation.

Experiment tried by a mother.

I fancy now that I can hear some of my readers, of a mind somewhat mature, saying, "I will myself try this experiment, and after writing the questions, I will read them to some younger members of the family, to see if they can find the answers." Perhaps the individual who resolves on this experiment is the head of a family—a mother. She gathers her children around her, after the public services on the Sabbath, and says to them, "We will study a chapter in the Bible. I will study it, and you shall study it. I will read it carefully, and write in this little book all the questions that I can think of; and you at the same time may read it attentively, and try to understand it, and remember what it contains. Then after tea we will gather around the table before our bright fire, and I will read my questions, and you may see if you can answer them."

The children enter with spirit into the plan. They gather into a little circle, and read their lesson aloud, verse by verse, questioning each other in regard to its difficulties, and endeavoring to anticipate the questions which the mother is preparing. Even the little Benjamin of the family is interested; who, though he can scarcely read, looks attentively upon his Bible with the large print, hoping that there will be some easy question to come to him.

At the appointed hour, they gather with eager interest to their recitation. The mother finds that many of her questions are ambiguous, some too difficult, and that others could not be answered, for other reasons. Still a large portion are understood and answered. The moral lessons of the chapter are brought to view, and gently but forcibly impressed upon the heart.

Are you a Sabbath-school teacher? Lay aside your printed question-book for one Sabbath, and write questions yourself upon the lesson of the day. Then compare what you have written with those printed for your use. Strike out

A Sabbath-school teacher.

3. Re-writing Scripture.

from your own list all that are upon the other, and carry the rest with you to your class, and say to your pupils somewhat as follows :

“ I have been writing a new set of questions on this lesson. Now, I do not suppose that you can answer any of them, because you did not have them while you were studying. But should you like to have me read them to you, and let you try ? ”

You will in such a case find the curiosity and interest of your class strongly awakened ; and though your first experiment may not fully succeed, you may say to them, “ I will write questions again for the lesson of next week. When you are studying your own questions, then, I should like to have you remember that I am writing other questions than those, and endeavor to understand and remember every fact stated in the lesson, so that you can answer all *my* questions as well as the printed ones. I know it will be difficult for you, but I presume that you can do it.”

A Sabbath-school teacher who will make such efforts as these, to render his work more intellectual, and to interest himself and his pupils more deeply in the thorough study of the Bible, will find that both himself and his pupils will advance with double rapidity.

3. *Re-writing portions of Scripture.* Read, or rather study, some portion of Scripture thoroughly, and then write the substance of it in your own language. I can illustrate this best, perhaps, by repeating the following dialogue. It is, I will suppose, Sabbath evening ; the family are going out, and one son, a boy of fourteen, is to be left at home.

“ What shall I do this evening ? ” asks the son.

The father turns to the fifth chapter of Luke, and says :

“ Take this chapter, read the first eleven verses, and form a clear and distinct conception of the whole scene, just as if you had witnessed it. Then write an account of it in your

| The boy's evening work. | Actual case. | Passage. |
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own language. Be careful to write *entirely in your own language.*"

"Must I not use the language of the Bible at all?"

"No. You have two separate things to do. First, read the account attentively and thoroughly, in order to form in your own mind a distinct picture of the whole. Try to see it as plainly as if you had stood upon the bank and actually looked down upon the whole transaction. Then shut your Bible, and write *your own account* of it, just as if you were writing a letter to me, and describing something which you had yourself seen."

Now suppose the boy engages in this work in the manner described above, with how much more interest than usual will he read the passage! He will scrutinize it carefully; examine every circumstance of the narrative minutely, and notice many points of interest which would ordinarily escape him.

Once when I asked a lad, under circumstances similar to these, to re-write this passage, he had not been five minutes at his work before he came with a question which I presume hundreds of my readers have never thought to ask, though they all have doubtless read the passage again and again. I must, however, first give the passage.

LUKE v. 1.

1. And it came to pass that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret.
2. And saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.
3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people out of the ship.
4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.
5. And Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all

Difficulty arising.

Explanation of it.

the night, and have taken nothing ; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net.

6. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes ; and their net brake.

7. And they beckoned unto their partners which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken.

10. And so were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11. And when they had brought their ships to land they forsook all and followed him.

The difficulty which the boy proposed was this :

"In the second verse," says he, "it is stated that the fishermen had *gone out of their boats*, and were washing their nets, but in the third, Christ enters one of the boats and asks Simon to move off a little from the shore ; that seems to imply that Simon was still in his boat."

How apparent was it from this question, that the boy was reading the Bible understandingly, and not merely repeating once more the familiar sounds by which the scenes of that passage are described ! Upon a little reflection, it was manifest that *Simon* might have remained in his boat, while the fishermen *generally* had gone ashore ; or he might have stood near, so as to be easily addressed by the Savior. The difficulty vanished in a moment. But, by the ordinary, dull, sluggish reading of the Bible, both difficulty and solution would have been alike unseen.

The following was the description produced in this case : I copy it without alteration, that my readers may see, from actual inspection of an actual example, what degree of success they may expect to attain.

The paraphrase.

JESUS AND THE FISHERMEN.

"Once, as Jesus was standing near a lake called Gennesaret, a great multitude crowded around him, wishing to have him address them. He saw near the shore two fishing vessels, but the fishermen had gone away to clean their nets. He went into one of them, which belonged to Simon, and asked him to shove the vessel out a little way into the water, and he talked to the people from the deck. When he had finished, he told Simon to go out into the sea and cast in their nets in order to get some fish. And Simon said to him, we have been working all night and have not caught any thing, but as you have desired it, we will let down our nets again. Having done it, they took a great many fishes, and their net was broken, and there were so many fishes that both ships were filled and began to sink. Simon was so much astonished, and they that were with him, at taking so many fishes this time, when they had been laboring all night and caught nothing, that (he fell down before Jesus, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man.) Simon's companions, James and John, were also surprised at the fishes. And when they had brought their ships to the shore they left all their things and followed Jesus."

The part inclosed in a parenthesis is Scripture language. The boy said that he could not express that idea in any other way, and he used the parenthesis as a mode of indicating that the language of the Bible was, in that clause, retained.

This example, as is obvious from the style and language in which the narrative is given, was the work of quite a youthful student. The exercise itself, however, is of such a nature as to be adapted to any stage of intellectual progress; and the writing of such narratives may be carried to a greater or less extent according to the taste and skill of the individual, or to the amount of time which he has at his disposal for such a purpose. I knew a young man who rewrote the whole book of the Acts in this way. He devoted the Sabbath afternoons to the work, from the close of the services at church to the tea hour. He made a neat manuscript copy of his work as he proceeded, illustrating it with

Plan tried by James and John.

maps, which he drew for the purpose. The benefit which he derived from the work was incalculable, not only in respect to the very minute, thorough, and accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, which he acquired by means of it, but in the general development and cultivation of his intellectual powers.

4. *Collating the Scriptures.* The next method that I shall describe, by which variety and efficiency can be given to your study of the Scriptures, may be called collation. It consists of carefully comparing two or more different accounts of the same transaction.

To illustrate it, I will imagine that two young persons sit down on a Sabbath afternoon by their fire-side to read the Bible, and they conclude to collate the several accounts of Paul's conversion. To show that this exercise does not require any advanced age, or any great maturity of mind, I will imagine that the scholars are quite young, and will give in detail the conversation, as we might imagine it in such a case to be. We will suppose James to be thirteen or fourteen years of age, and John some years younger.

John. "Well, what shall we read?"

James. "I think it would be a good plan for us to read and compare the two accounts of the conversion of Paul. Here is the first account in the 9th chapter of the Acts; and I believe Paul himself afterward gave some account of it in his speech."

John. "What speech?"

James. "Some speech that he made when he was upon trial. I will find it; it is somewhere in the last part of the book of Acts."

The boys turn over the leaves of their Bibles, until at last James says,

"Here it is; I have found it; it is in the 26th chapter."

Three accounts of Paul's conversion.

"No," says John, "it is in the 22d; it begins at the 4th verse."

James. "Let me see it. O, there are two accounts in his speeches; that makes three in all. Shall we compare them all?"

John. "Yes; we can put our fingers into all the places, and read one verse of one, and then one verse of another, and so go through."

James. "Well, let us see where these two speeches were made."

The boys then examine the introductory remarks connected with these two addresses of the Apostle, and learn before whom and under what circumstances they were made, and then proceed with their comparison.

James. "I will read first in the 9th chapter."

1. "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest,

2. "And desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

"Now you may read as much," he continues, "in the 22d chapter."

John. "Where shall I begin?"

James. (Looking at the passage,) "At the 5th verse, I believe."

John. (Reading,) "As also the high-priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders; from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished."

Effect of this method.

“ Do you see any difference, James ?”

James. “ Yes ; there are two differences : it is said in the first account that Paul took letters from the *high-priest* alone ; and in the second, from the elders too—*all the estate of the elders.* It is said, too, in the first account, that his letters were to the *synagogues*, but in the second, that they were to the *brethren.*”

Boys of twelve years of age would probably see no farther than to notice such obvious points of comparison as those that I have mentioned ; but a maturer mind, attempting this same exercise, would go far deeper, and consequently with a stronger interest, into the subject. Such a one will take great pleasure in observing how every expression in the account in the twenty-second chapter corresponds with the circumstances in which Paul was placed. He was in Jerusalem. A great popular tumult had been excited against him. A few of his determined enemies had, by the arts with which it is always easy for bad men to inflame the multitude, urged them on almost to fury, and an immense throng had gathered around him, with the marks of the most determined hostility in their looks and gestures and actions. At this moment a Roman military force appeared for his rescue ; he was drawn out from the crowd, and standing upon the stairs of the castle, above the tumultuous sea from which he had been saved, he attempts to address the assembly.

He had been represented to the crowd as a foreigner—an Egyptian, who had come to Jerusalem to excite sedition and tumult ; and of course his first aim would naturally be to destroy this impression, and present himself before this assembly as their fellow-countryman—one who had long resided among them, and had regarded them as brethren. How natural is it therefore that he should speak distinctly of his connection with the Jewish nation ! He commences his

Advantages of this plan.

List of lessons.

account with the statement that he is a Jew—by birth, by education, and by feelings. This peculiarity in the speaker's condition, accounts most fully and in a most interesting manner for the difference between the expressions which he uses here, and those used in the ninth chapter. Where, in the *narrative*, the *high-priest* only was alluded to, in the *defense*, the speaker mentions respectfully all the *estate of the elders*. The *historian*, employing the simple historical style, says that Paul went with letters to the *synagogues*. The *orator*, in his effort to allay irritated feelings, uses the word *brethren*—a term equally correct, but far more suitable to his purpose.

I make these remarks, not to go into a commentary upon Paul's speech, but to show what kind of reflections will occur to an intelligent mind, in thus collating different portions of the sacred volume. Notice every difference; and endeavor to discover, in the circumstances of the case, its cause. You will find by so doing that new and striking beauties will arise to view at every step; the pages of the Bible will look brighter and brighter, with meaning hitherto unseen, and you will find new exhibitions of character and conduct so natural and yet so simple as to constitute almost irresistible evidence of the reality of the scenes which the sacred history describes.

There are a great many of the events of which two different accounts are given in the Bible, which may be advantageously collated in the manner above described. In hopes that some of my readers will study the Scriptures in this way, I enumerate some of them.

LESSONS.

SOLOMON'S CHOICE. 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles.

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE. 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles.

REVOLT OF THE TEN TRIBES " "

STORY OF ELISHA. " "

STORY OF ELIJAH. 1 Kings, 2 Chronicles.

STORY OF HEZEKIAH. Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah.

GENEALOGICAL LINE FROM ADAM TO ABRAHAM. Genesis and 1 Chronicles.

CATALOGUE OF THE KINGS OF ISRAEL. Kings and Chronicles.

CATALOGUE OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH. Kings and Chronicles.

PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST. Matthew, Mark, and Luke
THE SAVIOR'S ARREST. Four Evangelists.

HIS TRIAL. Four Evangelists.

HIS DEATH. Four Evangelists.

HIS RESURRECTION. Four Evangelists.

INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER. Matthew and 1
Corinthians.

GENEALOGY OF CHRIST. Matthew and Luke

The above subjects vary very much in the degree of intellectual effort necessary for their examination, and in almost every one of them the reader will often be involved in difficulties which he can not easily remove. If we merely read the Bible, chapter after chapter, in a sluggish and formal manner, we see little to interest us and little to perplex ; but in the more thorough and scrutinizing mode of study which I here suggest, both by this mode and the others which I have been describing, we shall find beauties and difficulties coming up together. Let every one who undertakes such a collation of different accounts, expect difficulty. Do not be surprised at apparent contradictions in the narrative ; you will find many. Do not be surprised when you find various circumstances in the different accounts which you find it impossible to bring together into one view ; you must expect such difficulties. Look at them calmly and patiently ; seek solutions from commentaries and from older Christians, and

what you can not by these means understand, quietly leave. A book which, under divine guidance, employed the pens of from fifty to a hundred writers—scattered through a period of fifteen hundred years; whose scenes extend over a region of immense extent, and whose narratives are involved with the most minute history of all the great nations of antiquity—Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome—such a book you must not expect to understand fully in a day.

5. *Studying by subjects.* Select some subject, such that the information which the Scriptures contain in respect to it is scattered through various portions of the sacred volume, and make it your study to collect this information, and bring it together in one general view. Take for instance the life of the Apostle Peter. Suppose you make it your business on one Sabbath, with the help of a brother, or sister, or any other friend who will unite with you in the work, to obtain all the information which the Bible gives in regard to him. By the help of the Concordance you will find all the places in which he is mentioned; you compare the various accounts contained in the four gospels; and observe in what they agree and in what they differ. After following down his history as far as the Evangelists bring it, you take up the book of the Acts, and go through that narrative, searching for information in regard to this Apostle, and omitting those parts which relate to other subjects. In this way you become fully acquainted with his character and history; you understand it as a whole.

Jerusalem is another good subject, and the examination would afford scope for the exercise of the faculties of the highest minds for many Sabbaths. Find when the city is first named, and from the manner in which it is mentioned, and the circumstances connected with the earliest accounts of it, ascertain what sort of city it was at that time. Then follow its history down; notice the changes as they

occur; understand every revolution, examine the circumstances of every battle and siege of which it is the scene, and thus become acquainted with its whole history down to the time when the sacred narration leaves it. To do this well, will require patient and careful investigation. You can not do it as you can read a single chapter—carelessly and with an unconcerned and uninterested mind; you must, if you would succeed in such an investigation, engage in it *in earnest*. And that is the very advantage of such a method of study; it breaks up effectually that habit of listless, dull, inattentive reading of the Bible which so extensively prevails.

You may in the same manner take the subject of the *Sabbath*; examine the circumstances of its first appointment, and then follow its history down, so far as it is given in the Bible, to the last Sabbath alluded to in the sacred pages.

The variety of topics which might profitably be studied in this way is vastly greater than would at first be supposed. There is a great number of biographical and geographical topics, and a great number which relate to manners, and customs, and sacred instructions. In fact, the whole Bible may be analyzed in this way, and its various contents brought before the mind in new aspects, and with a freshness and vividness which, in the mere repeated reading of the Scriptures in regular course can never be seen. It may assist the reader who is disposed to make the experiment, if I present a small list; it might be extended easily to any length.

BIOGRAPHICAL TOPICS.

Hezekiah.

Herod.

Daniel.

John the Baptist.

Elijah.

Peter.

Elisha.

Nicodemus.

Jeremiah.

Judas.

Intellectual study of the Bible.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL TOPICS.

| | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Jerusalem. | Samaria. |
| Egypt. | The Sea of Galilee. |
| The Nile. | Tyre. |
| Babylon. | The Philistines. |
| The Red Sea. | The Moabites. |
| The Jordan. | The Ammonites. |
| Damascus. | Ethiopia. |

TOPICS RELATING TO RELIGIOUS RITES.

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sacrifices. | The Ark of the Covenant. |
| The Sabbath. | The Tabernacle. |
| The Feast of Tabernacles. | Baptism. |
| The Passover. | The Lord's Supper |
| Fasting. | Synagogues. |

There are various other methods which might be mentioned and described ; but enough has been said to enable any one who is disposed, to engage at once, for a short time each Sabbath, in a truly intellectual study of the Bible. Parents can try the experiments which I have above described, in their families ; and Sabbath-school teachers can try them in their classes. Sabbath Schools would be astonishingly improved at once, if the teachers would put their ingenuity into requisition to devise and execute new plans, so as to give variety to the exercises. There should be a spirit and interest exhibited, both by the teacher and pupil, which the mere servile reading of printed questions, and listening to answers mechanically committed, never can produce.

There is far too little of this intellectual study of the Bible, even among the most devoted Christians. Its literature, its history, its biography, the connection of its parts—all are very little understood. It is indeed true, that the

Object of the historic form.

final aim of the Bible is to teach us personal religious duty. It comes to the conscience—not to the literary taste of men ; it is designed to guide their devotions, not to gratify their curiosity, or their love of historic truth. But why is it that God has chosen the historic form, as a means of communicating his truths ? Why is it that his communications with mankind were for so many years so completely involved with the political history of a powerful nation, that that whole history must be given ? Why is our Savior's mission so connected with the affairs of the Roman government, and all this connection so fully detailed, that no inconsiderable portion of the geography, and customs, and laws of that mighty empire, is contained in the Gospels and the Acts ? The moral lessons which our Savior taught might have been presented in their simple didactic form. The whole plan of salvation through the sufferings of a Redeemer, might have been given us in one single statement ; instead of this, we are left to gather it piece by piece from multitudes of narratives, and addresses, and letters. Why is it then, that instead of one simple proclamation from the Majesty on high, we have sixty or seventy different books, introducing us to the public history of twenty nations, and to the minutest incidents in the biographies of a thousand men ? It is that we may be excited by the interest of incident and story ; that religion and impiety may be respectively presented to us in living and acting reality ; and that the principles of God's government, and his dealing with men, may come to us in all the vividness of actual fact. If then we neglect to understand this history *as history*, and to enter into all the incidents which are detailed, we lose the very benefit which the Spirit had in view in making the Bible such a volume as it is. Without such an occasional effort to make the Scriptures a study, examining them intellectually, comparing one part with another, and endeavoring to bring vividly to view the scenes

Reading practically.Daily reading of the Bible.

which they present to our minds, it may safely be said that no one can truly understand the Bible, or enter at all into the spirit of its descriptions, its warnings, and its appeals.

But after all, it must still be remembered that the great object in studying the Bible is not merely to understand it. The revelation which God has made is a message sent, not to the intellect, but to the consciences and hearts of men ; and unless it reaches the conscience and the heart, it entirely fails of accomplishing its object. We ought, indeed, to gain an intellectual knowledge of it, but that is only to be considered as a means to enable us the more fully to apply to our own characters and conduct, the practical lessons which it teaches.

The Sabbath seems, for most persons, the most proper time for the systematic *study* of the Scriptures, but a portion of the sacred volume should be read practically every day. This part of my subject does not need so full an illustration as the other, for the great difficulty in regard to reading the Scriptures practically, is a want of disposition to do it. They who really wish to learn their duty and overcome the temptations that assail them,—and who desire that the sins of their hearts and lives should be brought to their view by the word of God, will easily make for themselves an application of the truths which the Bible contains

Will not all my readers do this, faithfully and perseveringly ? Resolve to bring a short portion of the preceptive or devotional parts of the Scriptures home to your heart every day ; and let your object be, in this daily reading of the Bible, not so much to extend your intellectual view of the field open to you in its pages, as to increase its moral and spiritual influence upon your heart and conduct. Be not so careful, then, to read this exact quantity, or that ; but to bring home some portion really and fully to the heart and to

Useless reading.

The apprentice.

the conscience—to do it so forcibly, that the influence of those few verses read and pondered in the morning, will go with you through the day.

Habitual reading of the Bible is, however, sometimes practiced with a different spirit from this. A boy, for example, whose parents or whose Sabbath-school teacher has convinced him that he ought to read the Bible daily, takes his book and sits down by the fire, and reads away, rapidly and thoughtlessly, the portion which comes in course. He looks up occasionally, to observe the sports of his brothers and sisters, or to join in their conversation, and then returns again to the verse which he had left. In fifteen minutes he rises from his seat, shuts his book, and pushes it into its place upon the shelf, saying, "There—I have read my chapter;" and this is the last that he knows or thinks of the Bible during the day.

Consider now another case. In an unfurnished and even unfinished little room, in some crowded alley of a populous

city, you may see a lad, who has just arisen from his humble bed, and is ready to go forth to his daily duties. He is a young apprentice,—and must almost immediately go to kindle his morning fire, and to prepare his place of business for the labors of the day. He first, however, takes his little Testament from his chest—and breathes, while he opens it, a



THE APPRENTICE.

Reading two verses aright.

silent prayer, that God will fix the lesson that he is about to read, upon his conscience and his heart. "Holy Spirit!" whispers he, "let me apply the instructions of this book to myself, and let me be governed by it to-day; so that I may perform faithfully all my duties to myself, to my companions, to my master, and to Thee." He opens the book, and reads perhaps as follows:—"Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, with honor preferring one another." He pauses; his faithful self-applying thoughts run through the scenes through which he is that day to pass, and he considers in what case this verse ought to influence him. "*Be kindly affectioned!*" I must treat my brothers and sisters, and all my companions, kindly to-day. I must endeavor to save them trouble, and to promote their happiness. "*In honor preferring one another.*" As he sees these words, he sighs to reflect how many times he has been jealous of his fellow-apprentices, on account of marks of trust and favor shown to them, or envious of the somewhat superior privileges enjoyed by those older than himself, and he prays that God will forgive him, and make him humble and kind-hearted in future, to all around him.

"*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*" He stops to consider whether he is habitually industrious, improving all his time in such a manner as to be of the greatest advantage to his master;—whether he is fervent in spirit; that is, cordially devoted to God's service, and full of benevolent desires for the happiness of all;—whether he serves the Lord in what he does, that is, whether all his duties are discharged from motives of love to his Maker and Preserver. While he thus muses, the fire burns. He shuts his book, and asks God to protect him as he now goes out into the labors and temptations of the day. God does bless and protect him. He has read, indeed, but *two verses*; but these verses he carries in his heart, and they serve as a me-

The Bible.

What quantity to read.

memorial of kindness and love to man, and fidelity toward God, which accompanies him wherever he goes, and keeps him safe and happy. The Bible is thus a light to his feet and a lamp to his paths. Which, now, of these, do you think, reads the Bible aright ?

Let no child who reads this understand me to say that I consider two verses enough of the Bible to read each day. What I mean by this case is, that so much more depends upon the spirit and manner with which the Bible is read, than the quantity—that a very small portion, properly read, may be far more useful than a much larger quantity hurried over in a careless and thoughtless manner. No precise rules can be given in regard to quantity ; it must vary with circumstances ; and of these the individual must, in most cases be the judge.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SABBATH.

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

My readers are undoubtedly generally aware that the present obligation to keep the Sabbath has been, by some persons, denied, on the ground that the keeping of one day in seven is a sort of *ceremony*, and that it was only intended to be required of the Jewish nation. I do not propose, in this chapter, to enter at all into a discussion of that subject. Most if not all, of those who will read this book, are undoubtedly satisfied in regard to it. I will, however, simply state the facts, on the ground of which the present binding authority of the Lord’s-day is generally admitted by Christians.

As soon as God had finished the creation, it is stated that he rested on the seventh day and sanctified it; that is, he set it apart for a sacred use. The time and the circumstances under which this was done, sufficiently indicate that it was intended to apply to the whole race, and to extend through all time. A ceremony solemnly established at the foundation of an empire, would be universally considered as designed to extend as far and to continue as long as the empire itself should extend and continue, unless it should be distinctly repealed. And so with a duty established at the foundation of a world.

Change from Saturday to Sunday.

Many years afterward, the Creator gave a very distinct code of laws to his people, the Jews. These laws were of two kinds, *ceremonial* and *moral*. It was the design of the former to be binding only upon the Jewish nation ; the latter are of a permanent and universal authority.

The *ceremonial* laws were merely repeated to Moses, and he made a record of them ; you will find them nearly all in the chapters of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. All the regulations relating to sacrifices are of this character. The *moral* laws were, however, given in the most solemn manner from Mount Sinai. They are the ten commandments, and they were written by the direct power of God himself, upon tables of stone, which were carefully preserved.

Now, as if to remove all possible ground of doubt in regard to his designs, the observance of the Sabbath was made the subject of one of these ten commandments ; and it has been observed from that day to this, by a vast majority of all those who have evinced a wish to obey their Maker's commands.

These facts are abundantly sufficient to convince those who are *willing* to keep the Sabbath, that God intended that all men should keep it. They who are not convinced, reveal by their doubts their unwillingness to obey. I would advise, therefore, any one who has doubts about the divine authority of the Sabbath, not to spend his time in looking for the arguments for and against, in this controversy, but to come at once to his heart. Ask yourself this question : " Do I fully understand what it is to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, and am I cordially and sincerely willing to do it ? " In the affirmative answer to this question you will find the solution to all your doubts.

The Sabbath was observed, from its establishment down to the coming of Christ, on the seventh day of the week, which is our Saturday. Our Savior rose from the dead on the day *after* the Sabbath, and we find soon after his resur-

Beginning of the Sabbath.

rection, that Christians observed that day instead of the former one, as sacred time. There is no direct command to do this, and no indication that there was any controversy about it at the time. We simply observe that the Christian community at once and simultaneously make the change. They keep one day in seven as before, but it is a different day. We infer that they had some authority for the change, though it is not at all necessary that that authority should be specified. It is the custom in most of the schools in New England to consider the afternoon of Saturday a half-holyday. Now, suppose a boy should leave this country to go on a foreign voyage, and after being absent many months, should return, and find, when Saturday afternoon comes, that all the boys in his native town go to school as usual, but that on *Monday* afternoon the schools are all suspended. He sees that this is the universal custom, and it continues so permanently. Now it is not, under these circumstances, at all necessary that the original vote of the school committee by which the change was made should come before him. The *universality of the practice* is the best of evidence in such a case. No boy would wish for more. It is just so with the evidence we have that the Sabbath was changed. Suddenly all Christians changed their practice ; they changed together, and without any evidence of a controversy, and the new arrangement has been adopted from that day to this.

But yet some persons are not quite satisfied about it, and there are various other questions connected with the time of the Sabbath, which have occasioned in the minds of many Christians serious doubts and perplexities. Some imagine that they ought to have more evidence of the change from the seventh to the first day of the week ; they think, too, that the Sabbath is intended to be commemorative of God's rest after finishing the creation, and that this object is lost by altering the day ; and some lose themselves in endless arguments on the

Idle controversies.

question whether sunset, midnight, or morning, marks the beginning of the sacred day. The difference of views on this subject produces some difference of practice. There are denominations of Christians who prefer to keep Saturday as holy time, and not Sunday, regarding the former as the seventh day meant by the commandment. There is a difference of practice, too, in regard to the time of commencing the holy day. In some portions of our land the Sabbath is understood to begin on the evening of Saturday, so that when the sun goes down on Sunday evening, they return to their usual duties and cares. In other places, midnight is considered as the limit which marks the beginning and the end of sacred time.

The actual inconvenience arising from this diversity is comparatively slight. The great evil which these differences of opinion produce, is the interminable disputes which arise from them. Perhaps some of my readers, when they saw the subject of the Sabbath announced, may have been curious to know which side I was going to take in regard to some of these points ; for example, on the question whether it is proper to commence holy time on Saturday evening, or on Sabbath morning. Now, in fact, I am going to take both sides. I am going to endeavor to convince you that it is entirely immaterial which is adopted, and that the whole subject is completely unworthy of being made a matter of controversy among Christian brethren.

When God gives us a command, I am aware that we must obey it *exactly*. But a command is obeyed exactly, if it is obeyed in all the particulars expressed in the words of it. I think the following principle may be laid down as fundamental in regard to all laws partaking of a ceremonial character, human and divine. *So far as the ceremonial part is essential, it will be distinctly described in the command.*

The fourth command partakes of the ceremonial character

A father's command to his boys.

It is for the observance of a particular day. It specifies what day, but it does not specify at what hour it is to begin, and therefore we are left to begin it in correspondence with *any common mode* of computing time.

But to illustrate the above-mentioned principle, for it seems to me that if it were cordially and fully admitted, it would save a vast number of disputes on many other subjects,—let us suppose that a father, about to be absent from his home, leaves his two boys with the simple direction that they should work a little while every day, in the garden. Now it is obvious that under such a general order as this, the boys are not bound to consider themselves as limited to any particular time for doing their work. They must consider their father's design in the command, and act in such a manner as to comply with the spirit of it; but they may do as they please about the time of beginning. They may work in the morning, or in the evening, or at mid-day, according to their own convenience.

Suppose, however, that the father had been a little more specific, and had said, “I wish you, my boys, while I am absent, to work *a few hours every forenoon* in the garden.” This would have been somewhat more definite. And just so far as it is definite in regard to the time, just so far it would be binding in that respect. The boys would not now be at liberty to choose whether they would work in the forenoon or in the afternoon, but still they would be at liberty in regard to the precise time of beginning. If one of the boys should attempt to prove that they ought to begin exactly at half-past eight, because the father had usually begun at that hour, or because the neighbors did, the other might reply, that the time of beginning was not specified in the command, and that they might accordingly, if they chose, begin at an earlier or later hour, if they only honestly fulfilled the

The question about the clock and the dial.

command by working faithfully as much as they supposed their father meant by the expression, "*a few hours.*"

Let us, however, make the command more definite still. Imagine the father to have said, "I wish you, my sons, to spend *from 9 till 12 o'clock*, every day, in the garden, working for me." This leaves them much less discretionary power. The time for beginning and ending is distinctly specified, and the command is binding, in regard to these points of form and manner, just so far as they are distinctly specified. Still there is room for a dispute. The spirit which makes so much of a controversy on the question whether holy time begins at sundown, or at midnight, would have easily made a controversy here. For we will suppose that there had been a clock in the hall of the house, and a dial in the garden. All my readers are aware, I presume, that a clock, if it is a good one, keeps regular, equal time; but that there is some irregularity in the motions of the heavenly bodies, which prevents the dial from always corresponding with it exactly. Sometimes the dial, which marks *apparent time*, that is, what appears to be the time by the sun, is before, and sometimes behind the clocks; for they mark the real, or *true time*, as it is called. Now, how easily might these boys get into a dispute on the question whether their father meant them to keep *true* or *apparent* time, that is, whether he meant them to begin by the clock or by the dial! for sometimes the difference is fifteen minutes. They might say that they must obey their father's command exactly, and each might undertake to show, from arguments drawn from the nature of time, which perhaps neither of them understood, or from the father's practice, or the practice of other workmen in the vicinity, that one method of computation or the other was the proper one. How unwise would this be! The proper ground unquestionably for boys in such a case to take would be, "It is no

Universal principle.Two doves.

matter which mode of reckoning we adopt ; it was not father's object to have us begin at any precise moment." "If you prefer the clock," one might say, "I have no objection to it. I think we have a right to take which we please, for father did not specify any thing in regard to it ; and if he had any preference, he would have stated it."

Just so in regard to the Sabbath. The command is in substance, "Keep holy one day in seven." There is no minute specification in regard to the moment of commencing the day to be thus observed, we are at liberty therefore to commence it according to *any established and common method of computing time.*

May not then the principle stated above be considered as universal, in regard to obedience to all laws of a ceremonial nature ? *So far as the form and manner are deemed essential, they are always distinctly expressed in the law.* Look at the laws in these States for the solemnization of marriages : all that is essential is distinctly expressed. So with the laws in regard to the transfer of property : every form that is intended to be required is detailed in the statute. So with the purely ceremonial laws of the Jews. If a command required the sacrifice of two doves, the Jew would plainly not feel at liberty to bring *one* or *three*, nor to offer, instead of the bird prescribed, vultures or sparrows. But he just as plainly would be at liberty to offer doves of any color ; he might choose black or white, or any other hue : and if his neighbor should say to him, "Your doves are not of the right kind ; nobody offers such doves as those ;" his proper reply would be, "I obey the command. The color is not specified." So with Christians in keeping the Sabbath. It is not essential whether you begin at sundown or at midnight ; if you keep the Sabbath faithfully and regularly according to one method or the other, you obey the command ; the moment for beginning is not specified.

A day of $23\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

A day at the pole.

It seems to me that any person who endeavors to obtain a philosophical idea of the nature of our mode of computing time by days, must see the impossibility of marking any precise limit for the commencement and close of sacred time. Nothing is more indefinite, if we take an enlarged and philosophical view of the subject, than the word *day*. Astronomers commence it at twelve o'clock at noon. Some nations begin it at midnight. On shore it is reckoned as commencing at one hour, and at sea, as at another. The day, too, begins at a different time in every different place, so that a ship at sea, beginning a day in one place and ending it in another, sometimes will have $23\frac{1}{2}$ and sometimes $24\frac{1}{2}$ hours in her day, and no clock or time-piece whatever can keep her time. An officer of the ship is obliged to determine the beginning of their day every noon by astronomical observation. A sea captain can often make a difference of an hour in the length of his day, by the direction in which he steers his ship; because a day begins and ends in no two places, east and west of each other, at the same time. At Jerusalem they are six hours in advance of us in their time, and at the Sandwich Islands six hours behind. In consequence of this, it is evident that the ship, changing her longitude, must every day change her reckoning. These sources of difficulty in marking out the limits of a day, increase as we go toward the pole. A ship within fifty miles of the pole might sail round on a parallel of latitude, and keep it one continual noon or midnight all the year; only noon and midnight would be there almost the same. At the pole itself all distinction between day and night entirely and utterly ceases; summer and winter are the only change. Habitable regions do not indeed extend to the pole, but they extend far beyond any practical distinction between noon and midnight, or evening and morning.

The difference between the times of commencing and of

A day lost.

No sunset for months.

Sabbaths in Greenland.

ending days in different parts of the earth is so great, that a ship sailing round the globe, loses a whole day in her reckoning, or gains a whole day, according to the direction in which she sails. If she sets out from Boston, and passes round Cape Horn, and across the Pacific Ocean, to China, thence through the Indian and Atlantic Oceans home, she will find on her arrival, that it is Tuesday with her crew, when it is Wednesday on shore. Each of her days will have been a little longer than a day is in any fixed place, and of course she will have had fewer of them. So that if the passengers were Christians, and have endeavored to keep the Sabbath, they will not and can not have corresponded with any Christian nation whatever in the times of their observance of it. I suppose my readers will believe these facts on my testimony; but they will have a far more vivid idea of the truth in this case, if they will ask some sea captain, who has sailed round or half round the globe, if it is not so, and converse with him on some of the interesting questions and difficulties which arise from this peculiarity in the nature of the computation of time.

But beside this difficulty arising from the variation in the time at different longitudes, there are also other causes which will produce greater difficulty still in the way of marking out a precise moment at which the boundary between sacred and common time is to be marked. As we go north or south from the equator, the lengths of the days increase in the summer season, until at last, as I have already intimated, in a certain latitude the sun ceases altogether to set for a period equal to many weeks of our reckoning. Now what will a man who supposes that our Maker meant to command all mankind to keep the Sabbath *exactly from sunset to sunset, or from midnight to midnight*—what will such a man say to a Christian in Greenland, where the sun does not set for months together?

Change to the first day.

Is the moral law limited to latitude in its application, or did the great Framer of it not know, or did he forget that the motions of the sun which he himself ordained, would give to some of the people to whom the command was addressed, no sunset or midnight for months at a time? No; it is absurd to press a written command to any greater strictness, in regard to the form and manner of its observance, than the letter expresses. God says to us simply, "Keep holy one day in seven." We may reckon that day in any of the common methods of computing time. If it was customary in old times to reckon the day from sundown to sundown, the servants of God would probably reckon their Sabbaths so too. If it is customary now to reckon from midnight to midnight, we may reckon our Sabbath so. We must keep the command in *its spirit*, but we need not press *the form* any farther than the letter of the command itself presses it.

The same principles apply to the change from the seventh day to the first. This is not *an alteration of the command*, but only *of practice under the command*, in a point which the letter of the law does not fix. Christians labor six days and rest the seventh *now*. By our artificial nomenclature we call it the *first*; but that does not alter the real nature of the command, which is simply, that *after every six days of labor there shall be regularly one of rest*. This requirement has never been changed or touched; it stands among the ten commands, unaltered and unalterable, like all the rest. The *practice*, in a point not fixed by the phraseology of the command, is indeed altered; but that no more affects obedience to the law than a change from parchment to paper, in the drawing up of a legal instrument, would violate a law which did not prescribe the material. Who would think of saying in such a case, "The law has been altered;—when the statute was enacted, the universal practice was to write

No change in the command.

The creation.

upon parchment, and now men universally use paper ;—we can find no authority for the change, and consequently the law is broken ?” The law would not be broken unless it unequivocally *mentioned* parchment in contra-distinction from all other materials. The day then in present use is to be continued as the holy time until it is changed by proper authority, and the change made known in a proper manner. But that authority and that manner need not be by any means so formal as was the original command, because it does not alter that command at all ; it only alters practice arising under the command, and that in a point which the law itself does not specify.

Some one may perhaps, however, say that the Sabbath was established in commemoration of the rest of Jehovah after the creation, and that this object is lost by the change of day. But a moment’s reflection will remove this difficulty. After seven weeks had passed, the Sabbath would come on the forty-ninth day after the creation. Now suppose it had then been changed, by being moved one day forward, so as to come on the fiftieth ; who can give any good reason why the fiftieth day may not as well be celebrated in commemoration of the creation as the forty-ninth. Besides, if the precise time of God’s resting is to be reckoned at all, it is to be reckoned according to the culmination of the sun at Eden, and the day there is many hours in advance of us here ; so that strict, precise accuracy, in regard to hours and minutes, is, in every view of the case, entirely out of the question ; and the fact that the command does not attempt to secure it, gives evidence that it was intended for *general circulation among mankind*. To a person standing still in one place, and looking no farther than to his own limited horizon, the word *day* seems definite enough ; but when a voice from Mount Sinai speaks to the whole world, commanding all men, at sea and on land, in the Arctic regions, and under

Principle important.

an equinoctial sun, under every meridian and at every parallel, to remember one day in seven and keep it holy, there must be great diversity in the form and moment of obedience. We can not, looking over the whole field, find a precise and universal limit. The command, if we consider it as addressed *to the world*, is entirely indefinite in regard to the precise period of the commencement and close of sacred time ; but the great principle of it is clear :—Keep one day in seven, *according to some common mode of computation*, holy to the Lord.

I should not have spent so much time in endeavoring to prove that minnte accuracy in regard to the form and manner of obeying this command is unattainable, were it not that this discussion involves a *principle* which applies to many other cases ; so that if you are induced to see its reasonableness, and to admit its force fully and cordially in this case, you will be saved from a great deal of useless perplexity about the minutiae of form in a great many other cases. Remember then this principle, that commands are to be obeyed *in their spirit*, except when the precise form is *a matter of positive and distinct specification*.

I have one or two practical remarks to make in reference to this part of my subject.

1. In respect to those points of duty on which the Scriptures give no direct instructions, you will do well to conform to the customs of Christians around you. If you live in a community where the Sabbath is generally commenced on Saturday evening, begin yours at that time: conform not only to this, but in all other unimportant points ; kneel, or stand, or sit at prayers, as other people do around you. I have known persons so controlled by the determination to have their own way in little things, and to consider all other ways wrong, that they could not *sit at table* while a blessing

was asked, as is the common custom in many places, without being very much shocked at the imaginary irreverence. Some men will be pained if a minister say *we* in the pulpit, and others will quarrel with him if he says *I*; and a grave discussion is sometimes carried on, on such points as these, in religious journals. One Christian can not endure a *written* prayer; another can not bear an *extempore* one. A is troubled if there is an organ in the church, and B thinks that music at church is nothing without one. C will almost leave the meeting-house if he should see the minister come in wearing a silk gown; and D would be equally shocked at seeing him in the ordinary dress of a layman. Now all this is wrong. These points are not determined by any express command in the Bible, and consequently they are left to the varying taste and convenience of mankind. Every person may perhaps have a slight preference, but this preference he ought at all times to be willing to give up, in consideration of the wishes and feelings of his Christian brother. He who intends to do good in this world, must go about among mankind with a spirit which will lead him to conform, easily and pleasantly, with the customs of men, except in those cases where the letter or the spirit of the Bible forbids it.

This discussion brings to our notice what may be considered a striking characteristic of the requirements of the law of God, namely that they are peculiarly liable to evasion. Their peculiarity in this respect, is, in fact, one great source of their power as a means of moral discipline. Human laws are very different from the divine laws in this respect, because the object which they aim at is different. The design of human laws is simply to prevent outward acts of crime on account of the injury which they do; that of the divine law, on the other hand, is to improve and perfect the inward character. The difference of design leads to great dissimilarity in the forms of the enactments, by which the respective codes

Human and divine laws.

are promulgated. How much pains do men take, when making laws, to cut off every possible chance of escape, by specifying with minute accuracy all the details of transgression ! Hence the enactments of men are very voluminous. The laws of a state on the subject of theft will fill a volume ; but God disposes of the whole subject in four words, " **THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.**" The **HUMAN** lawgiver studies to cut off, by the fullness and legal accuracy of his language, every opportunity for quibbling or evasion ; but if any man wishes to escape from the laws of God by quibbling and evasion, he may ; the door is wide open ; and that is what gives the law of God its admirable adaptedness to be the means of moral discipline to the human soul.

The reason why it produces this effect is this : The more strict and minute are the details of a command, the less room is there for the exercise of fidelity and voluntary obedience. The command in regard to the Sabbath for example, might have been so precise and specific, that the whole world should know exactly the moment when the sacred time is to begin, and exactly the manner in which its hours are to be spent ; nay more, God might have so interrupted the course of nature, that all the business of life must necessarily have ceased, and men have thus been compelled to rest on the Sabbath. But this would have been no moral trial ; it would have afforded no moral discipline. God does not accordingly adopt such a course. He expresses his command in general and simple language. *They who wish to obey,* can easily ascertain what they ought to do ; and *they who do not,* will easily find excuses.

There are some, and perhaps many, who make the question whether Saturday or Sunday evening is to be kept, an excuse for keeping neither. But those who *wish to obey God's commands* will keep one or the other faithfully ; and one great design in having uncertainty in such

Spirit of the law.James's way of reading the Bible.

cases as this is unquestionably to *try us*—to prove who does and who does not wish, on vain pretexts, to evade God's commands.

I proceed to consider the *spirit and manner* in which the Sabbath should be kept.

The object of the Sabbath is to interpose an effectual interruption to all worldly business, and to promote as highly as possible the improvement of the character. Do then these two things: 1st, suspend all worldly pursuits; and 2d, spend the day in such a manner as will best promote your spiritual improvement. The first point is easy; I shall therefore pass it by, and direct my attention immediately to the last.

There are wise and there are unwise ways of keeping the Sabbath holy. James is a boy who has set his heart upon reading the Bible through in as short a time as possible, and he thinks that there is no other way of spending the Sabbath so properly as by carrying forward this good work with all his strength. He carries his Bible to bed with him at night, and places it under his pillow, that he may read in it as soon as it is light in the morning. You may see him at breakfast-time counting up the chapters that he has read, and calculating how long it will take him at that rate to get through a certain book. He can hardly wait for family prayers to be over, he is so eager to press forward his work. He reads a great many chapters in the course of the day, and lies down at night congratulating himself on his progress; but, alas! he has made no *progress in piety*. His perusal of sundry chapters in the Bible, as if he were reading for a wager, is not progress in piety. He has spent the day without examining his heart. He has not made resolutions for future duty. He has not learned to be a more dutiful son, a more affectionate brother, or a more humble and devoted

A boy studying the Bible.

The boat.

Christian. No, he has read twenty chapters in the Bible ! That is all. He has been making no new discoveries of his secret sins, has obtained no new views of his duty, has not drawn nigh to God and found peace and happiness in communion with him ; no, he has had no time for that ; he has been busy all day running over his twenty chapters in the Bible ! It were well if James were aware that his real motive for this work is the pride of thinking and perhaps of telling others how much he has read, and that the cultivation of such a spirit is a bad way of spending God's holy day. I would not say a word against reading the Bible, but it must be read in a proper manner. A person may *waste every hour of the Sabbath*, and yet do nothing but read the Bible from morning to night.

Many young persons think there is no way to break the Sabbath but by work or play. But the spirit and meaning of the fourth commandment undoubtedly is, that the Sabbath should be devoted to the real improvement of the Christian character. And if this is neglected, the Sabbath is broken, no matter in what way its hours have been spent.

Yes, if this is neglected, the command is disobeyed ; no formal attention to any external duty whatever can be made a substitute for it. A boy sits at his window studying his Sabbath-school lesson ; his object, I will suppose, is not to learn his duty and to do it, but he wishes to surpass some companion at the recitation, or is actuated it may be by a mere selfish desire to obtain a reward which has been perhaps injudiciously offered him ; he looks out of the window across the valley which extends before his father's house, and sees upon a beautiful pond there, a boatful of his playmates, pushing off from the shore. They are going out on an excursion of pleasure.

“ Ah ! ” says he, “ those wicked boys ! they are breaking the Sabbath ! ”

Self-righteousness.

The careful mother.



SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Yes, *they are* breaking the Sabbath; and so is he; both they and he are perverting the holy day. God looks at *the heart*, and requires that all should spend the Sabbath in honest efforts to discover, and confess, and abandon sin, and to become pure and holy and devoted to him. Now, both the boys in the boat and the one at the window are neglecting this. *They* are doing it for the pleasure of a sail; *he* is doing it for the honor of superiority in his class. The day is misspent and perverted in both cases.

Mrs. X. is the mother of several children, and she is exceedingly desirous that all her family should faithfully keep the Sabbath. She can not bear the thought that it should be profaned by any under her roof. Before sacred time comes, therefore, the whole house is put in order, all worldly business is brought to a close, so that the minds of her family

The careful mother.

may be free. All this is excellent; but how does she actually spend the sacred hours? Why, her whole attention is devoted to enforcing *the mere external duties* of religion in her household. She is careful to banish every secular book; she requires one child to sit still and read the Bible; another she confines to a prayer-book, or to some good book of religious exhortation; a third is kept studying a Sabbath-school lesson. All however must be still; it is her great desire and aim to banish every thing like worldly work or play. There must be no light conversation, and even the little infant, creeping upon the floor, has to relinquish her playthings, and spend the day in inaction.

Now, when night comes, this mother thinks that she has kept the Sabbath, and induced her household to keep it too; and perhaps she has done so. But all that I have described does not prove that she has kept it according to God's original design. God did not institute the Sabbath in order merely that children might be kept from play, or that they might be forced to read, mechanically, good books; but that they might *improve their characters, and make real preparation for another world.* Now, unless a mother adopts such methods as shall most effectually promote *the improvement* of her children, and unless she succeeds in interesting them in it, she does not attain the object in view. If your children are spending the day in a cold and heartless manner, complying with your rules from mere fear of your authority, they are not, properly speaking, keeping the Sabbath. The end in view, improvement of character, is not attained.

But many a mother who reads this will ask, "How can I interest my children in such efforts for improvement?" You will find a hundred ways, if you will set your heart upon it. The only danger is, that you will not fully feel the necessity of it. You are satisfied, or there is great danger that you will be satisfied, with the mere formality of external decorum

Way to interest children.

on the Lord's-day, forgetting that the empire in which your influence ought to reign on that day, is the empire of the heart, not of the external conduct. You ought, therefore, to aim at adopting such means of addressing and influencing your children as shall seem best calculated to reach and control their hearts. If you really wish to do this, and really endeavor to do it, you will soon learn the way.

Imagine such a scene as this: A mother, with several children under eight or ten years of age, collects them in her chamber on a pleasant Sabbath afternoon in summer, and with a cheerful countenance and pleasant tone of voice, when all are seated, addresses them as follows:

"Now, my children, you know that the Sabbath is intended to give us time and opportunity to improve our characters. I suppose you wish to do this. The way to do it is, first, to find out your faults, and then to correct them. Are you willing to try to find out your faults?"

"Yes, mother."

"I have thought of this plan. How should you like it? I will pause a minute or two, and we will all try to think of faults that we have seen among ourselves within a week. You may try, and I will try. After a minute or two, I will ask you all around. Should you like to do this?"

A mother who is accustomed to manage her children in a proper manner, with habitual kindness and affection, will receive a cordial assent to such a proposal as this. After a few minutes she puts the question round:

"Mary, have you thought of any thing?"

"Yes, mother; I think that John and I quarrel sometimes."

"Do you think of any case which happened last week?"

Mary hesitates, and John looks a little confused.

"You may do just as you please," says the mother, "about describing it. It is unpleasant to think and talk

Conversation with the children.

about our faults, and of course it will be unpleasant for you to describe particularly any thing wrong which you have done. But then if you do honestly and frankly confess it, I think you will be much less likely to do wrong in the same way next week."

Mary then relates, in her own simple style, the story of some childish contention, not with the shrinking and hesitation of extorted acknowledgment, but openly and frankly, and in such a manner as greatly to diminish the danger of falling into such a sin again. When she has said all that she has to say, which however may perhaps have been expressed in two or three sentences, the mother continues, addressing herself to the others :

" Well, children, you have heard what Mary has said. Have you observed any thing in her expressions which tended to show that she has wished to throw the chief blame of this dispute upon John ?"

They will probably say, Yes. A child would not be a very impartial historian in such a case, and other children would be very shrewd to detect the indications of bias.

" Now I do not know," says the mother, " but that John was really the most to blame. Mary told the story, on the whole, in a very proper manner. I only asked the question, to remind you all that our object is now to learn *our own faults*, and to correct them ; and you must all try to see as much as possible where *you yourselves* have been to blame."

She then turns to some passages of the Bible on the subject of forbearance and harmony between brothers and sisters, and reads them—not for the purpose of loading her children with invective and reproach, or telling them, with a countenance of assumed solemnity, how wicked they have been—but of kindly and mildly pointing out what God's commands are, and the necessity as well as the happiness of obeying them.

Ingenuity and effort necessary.

The heart to be reached.

If this is done in a proper manner, and if the mother remembers that she must watch the feelings of her little charge, and apply her means of influence dexterously and skillfully, she will succeed, certainly after one or two trials, in producing a dislike of contention, a desire to avoid it, and a resolution to sin, in this respect, no more. She may in the same manner go through the circle ; fault after fault will be brought up ; the nature and the consequences of them kindly pointed out, and those commands of God, which bear upon the subject, plainly brought to view. The interview may be closed by a short and simple prayer—that God will forgive, for Christ's sake, the sins which the children have confessed, and give them all strength to resist temptation during the coming week. Such an exercise, if managed as every kind and faithful mother can manage it, must certainly succeed ; the children will go away from it with consciences relieved in some degree from the burden of sin ; they will look back upon it as a serious, but a pleasant interview, and will feel—though a wise mother will not be over anxious to draw from them an *expression* of that feeling—that it is a happy thing to repent of sin, and to return to duty. I asked my readers at the outset, to imagine this scene ; but, in fact, it is not an imaginary scene—in substance, it is reality.

This, now, is a proper keeping of the Sabbath. Such an influence comes to *the heart*, and it accomplishes directly and immediately the very object that Jehovah seems to have had specially in view in the appointment of the Sabbath. I only offer it, however, as a specimen ; if repeated in exactly this form every Sabbath, the sameness might become tiresome. The idea which I mean to convey is, that *the heart* must be reached, and the process of improvement must be advancing, or the object of the Sabbath is lost. Let my young readers remember this. Unless you are improving and elevating your characters, discovering your faults and

correcting them, learning God's will as it applies to your own conduct, and confessing and forsaking your sins—unless you are doing such work as this, you can not be keeping the Sabbath day. The simple question then is, are you willing *to devote honestly and conscientiously one day in seven to real and sincere efforts to make progress in piety?*

If you are willing, and every Christian certainly will be, you are not to go forward blindly, reading and reflecting without system or plan, on the vain supposition that if the mind is actually employed on religious subjects, all is going on well. You must take into careful consideration the nature of the human mind, and the means which, according to the laws which the Creator has given it, are most calculated to have an influence over it. This principle will require attention to several points.

1. *Variety in the exercises of the Sabbath.* While reflecting upon this topic, and considering how I should present it here, I accidentally fell into conversation with a clergyman who had had far more experience as a religious teacher than I have enjoyed. I requested him to reduce to writing the views which he expressed, that I might insert them here. He soon after sent me the following :

“ Many Christians who feel deeply the importance of spending the Sabbath in a proper manner, find, notwithstanding all their endeavors, that the sacred hours do at times pass heavily and wearily along. Now the Sabbath should be not only our most profitable, but our most happy day. I once knew a young Christian who resolved that he would keep the Sabbath in the most perfect manner possible, by passing the whole time in prayer ; he did so, but very soon he became exhausted and weary. He however persevered through the whole day, with the exception of a few necessary interruptions ; and when night came, he felt a deadness

Necessity of variety.

Religious books.

and exhaustion of feeling which he unhappily mistook for spiritual desertion. No human mind can, in ordinary cases, sustain very long and intense application to one subject ; there must be variety, or the efforts that are made, however well meant and however faithfully persevered in, will result in mental exhaustion, listlessness, and spiritual lethargy.

“ Let the sacred hours of the Sabbath, then, be appropriated to a variety of religious employments. Let us suppose the case of a young man,—the head of a family,—who wishes to pass the Sabbath in a way acceptable to God, and to enjoy his religious duties. Let us follow him through the hours of the day, and see what his arrangements might properly be :

“ He rises early in the morning, and commences the day with a short, but fervent prayer, for the divine blessing ; he then passes the time till breakfast, in reading the Bible. Perhaps, for the sake of variety, he spends a part of the time in reading the devotional portions, and a part in perusing its interesting history. At the breakfast-table, with cheerful countenance and heart, he leads the conversation to religious subjects ; after breakfast he passes an hour in reading some valuable religious book,—some one of those standard, practical works upon Christianity that are now easily to be obtained by all. Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, Baxter’s Saint’s Rest, Law’s Serious Call, Doddridge’s Rise and Progress, &c. are works of standard merit, and works with which all Christians may, and should be acquainted. It is very desirable that the Christian should have on hand some book like one of these, which he will read in course, taking a moderate portion every Sabbath day, until he has finished it.

“ At length the time arrives for the assembling of his family for morning prayers. He adheres to his principle, of endeavoring to secure an interesting variety, here. Sometimes he will read religious intelligence from a periodical,—

and sometimes an interesting narrative from a tract,—always taking care to select something which will excite attention. After finishing this, he opens the Bible and selects some appropriate passage, and reads it, with occasional remarks intended to deepen the impression upon his own mind, and upon the minds of those in the circle around him. He then selects a hymn, and after singing a few verses, if the family are able to sing, bows at the family altar in prayer. The variety which he has thus introduced into the exercise has continued to interest the feelings of all, and no occasion has been offered for lassitude or tedium.

“ He now walks the room for exercise, and reviews the past week ; he thinks of the opportunities to do good which he has neglected, examines his feelings and his conduct, and in ejaculatory prayer, seeks forgiveness. When he enters the place of public worship his mind is ready for active service there. He really unites with his pastor in the public prayer. When a hymn is read, he attends to the sentiment, and makes melody in heart to God when singing his praises. He listens attentively to the sermon, feeling that the responsibility of being interested in it comes upon him, and he prays that God will bless it to his own soul, and to the conversion of others.

“ Perhaps, in the interval between forenoon and afternoon service, he has a class in the Sabbath School, or is himself a member of the Bible class : these duties he performs with a sincere desire to do good. After the close of the afternoon services he retires to his closet for secret prayer. He appropriates a proper period to this duty, and presents his own private and personal wants, and the spiritual interests of others, in minute detail to God ;—he looks forward, too, to the duties of the week ; he brings before his mind the temptations to which he will be exposed, the opportunities for exerting a Christian influence which he possesses, and forms

his plans of Christian usefulness for the week ; he thinks of some good object which he will make an effort to advance, or of some individual whom he will endeavor to lead to the Savior. He forms his resolutions, and perhaps writes them down that he may refer to them again the next Sabbath, in the review of the week. At the appointed hour he assembles his family for evening prayers. A brief reference to the religious exercises of the day, or the reading of some interesting narrative, followed by the reading of the Bible, singing and prayer, again give variety and animation to the exercise ; and when all the duties of the day are over, as he is retiring to rest, he feels that the Sabbath has been profitably and happily spent. It has been to him a rich season of improvement and of enjoyment. He has made real progress in preparation for heaven ; he has obtained strength to meet the allurements and temptations of life. During the week he looks back upon the Sabbath with pleasure, and when the light of another holy morning dawns upon him, he can sincerely say,

‘ Welcome, delightful morn,
Thou day of sacred rest
I hail thy kind return—
Lord make these moments blest.’

“ In this way the Sabbath is a delight. It is a day of refreshment, and the spirit of man longs eagerly for its approach. I have introduced the above example simply as an illustration of what I mean by saying that there should be variety in the exercises of the Sabbath. Probably no one who reads these pages will find it expedient to adopt precisely the course here described. But all may proceed *upon this principle* here explained,—each adapting his individual plan to his own individual situation.”

2. *System in the exercises of the Sabbath.* Much time

Waste of time prevented.

Rest on the Sabbath.

is often lost upon the Sabbath for want of a *regular plan*. If a person reads for half an hour in the Bible, and then stops to consider what he shall take up next, his mind is perplexed. He says, "Shall I now retire for secret prayer, or shall I read a tract, or shall I take Baxter's *Saints' Rest*?" Several moments are lost in deciding. Perhaps he takes Baxter; but while reading, he stops to consider again whether it would not have been better to have chosen something else; and then his mind is diverted from this book by thinking what he shall next read; thus much time is lost, and the mind is perplexed. It is, therefore, wisdom to have a plan previously formed for the whole day. With a little reflection a plan may easily be arranged, appropriating systematically the time of the Sabbath to the several duties which ought to be performed. Many persons constantly do this. In all cases there will indeed be a liability to unavoidable interruptions. But we may derive much assistance from rules, without making ourselves slaves to them. If you have domestic duties which must be performed upon the Sabbath, have them performed, if possible, by a given hour, that they may not intrude upon *all* the hours of the sacred day. If you are constantly exposed to interruptions, if there is no time of the day which you can call your own, then let your plans be formed in accordance with this peculiarity in your situation.

3. *Rest on the Sabbath.* We ought to remember that God has ordained the Sabbath as a day of rest from labor, as well as a day of spiritual improvement, and it ought to be made such.

It is undoubtedly wrong to apply our minds so uninteruptedly to religious duties during the day, as to feel worn out and exhausted at night. There are indeed some exceptions; ministers and Sabbath-school teachers must, in fact, often do a very hard day's work on the Sabbath; they are

Distinct duties to be performed.

laboring for the religious good of others, and must be often fatigued by their efforts. But Christians, generally, must not so fill up the hours with mental labor as to prevent them from enjoying the rest which God requires on his holy day.

These three points, *variety*, *system*, and *rest*, ought to be attended to in order to secure the greatest possible moral progress on that day. A teacher of a school would be very unwise, were he to require his pupils to spend the whole of a day in actual study—and still more so if he were to keep them during all that time employed upon one single book or subject. Nor should he, on the other hand, relinquish all system, and employ his pupils every hour in doing whatever should happen to suggest itself to his thoughts. He knows that his pupils will actually advance more rapidly if he systematizes, and at the same time varies, their exercises, and allows intervals of rest and recreation. The Christian, too, who watches the movements of his own mind—and every Christian ought to do this—will soon learn that he must adopt substantially the same plan, if he wishes to make rapid progress in piety.

I will now proceed to mention, in order to be specific, several duties which I think ought to be performed on the Sabbath. I advise every one of my readers, immediately after perusing my account of these duties, to sit down and form a plan for himself, assigning to each one of them an appropriate place, devoting an hour or half an hour to each, according to his age, and his circumstances in other respects. This plan ought not, however, to occupy all the hours of the day; some time should be left unappropriated, to allow opportunity for rest, and for performing such duties as may from time to time arise to view. Make your plan, however, and resolve to try it at least for one Sabbath. You can then

Way to make self-examination interesting and useful.

consider whether to continue it, or to modify it, or to abandon it altogether.

1. *Self-examination.* I do not mean by this, the mere asking of yourself some general questions in regard to your spiritual condition, *a minute review of the various actual occurrences of the week*, to see what you have done, and what motives have actuated you. You can attend to this most successfully, by considering the subject under several distinct heads.

(1.) Your ultimate object of pursuit. Consider what has chiefly interested and occupied you during the week, and what is the final, ultimate object which you have in view in what you have been doing. Review all the labors that have been connected with that pursuit, whatever it may be, and find in what respects you have been pursuing your object with a wrong spirit.

(2.) Duties to parents. Consider what has been your conduct toward your parents, if you are still connected with them. Have they had occasion to reprove you during the week, or to be dissatisfied with you in any respect? If so, what was the cause? Think over the whole occurrence, and see wherein you were to blame in it. Look also at your habitual conduct toward your parents, or to those under whose care you are placed. Have you at any time disobeyed them, or neglected to obey them with alacrity? Have you had any dispute with them, or been sullen or ill-humored on account of their measures? You must look also to the other side of the question, and consider what *good* you have done to your parents. Self-examination implies the investigation of what is right in the character, as well as what is wrong. What good, then, have you done to your parents? In what cases did you comply with their wishes when you were tempted not to comply? When did you give them pleasure by your attention, or by your

Minuteness of self-examination.

faithful and ready obedience to their commands? You can spend half an hour most profitably, not in merely answering these individual questions, but in a careful review of all your conduct toward your parents, going into minute detail.

(3.) Duties to companions. What has been your deportment toward your companions? How many have you made happier during the past week? What good have you done, and by what means did you accomplish it? How many, too, have you made unhappy? If you have had any contention with any one, call to mind all the circumstances of it—the angry or reproachful, or ill-humored words which you have used, and the spirit of heart which you cherished. It will require a long time to review thoroughly all those events of a week which illustrate the spirit with which you have acted toward your companions.

(4.) Fidelity in business. You have some employment in which you ought to have been diligent and faithful during the week. Review minutely your conduct in this respect; begin with Monday morning, and come down to Saturday night, and see, by a careful examination of the labors of the week, whether you have been “diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

(5.) Secret sins. This is the most important part of self-examination. If you have committed secret sins, if you have indulged unholy thoughts and desires, if you have cherished malignant feelings toward others, if you have been tempted to any improper gratification, if you have done in secret what you would blush to find exposed to public view, examine yourself and repent. Explore the whole ground thoroughly, that you may confess and forsake such sins.

I might mention a number of other similar points, but it is unnecessary, as my object is only to show that self-examination, to be effectual, must be *minute*, and must be brought

to bear immediately and directly upon *the actual conduct*. You will succeed much better, if you divide the ground in some such manner as above described.

2. *Prayer.* This is the second duty which I shall mention, for which a place ought to be particularly assigned on the Sabbath. I have in several places in this book alluded to the subject of prayer, and I shall merely state here in what respects prayer on the Sabbath should be peculiar. More time should be allotted to the exercise, and it should also take a wider range. Consider your whole character, and look back upon the past, and forward to the future, so as to take a comprehensive view of your condition and prospects, and let your supplications be such as this extended survey will suggest.

There is one thing, however, which I ought to say here, though I shall speak more distinctly of it in a subsequent chapter. It is this: *Take a firm and immovable stand in the performance of the duty of secret prayer.* Let nothing tempt you to neglect, or postpone, or curtail it, or pass over the season of your communion with God in a hurried and formal manner. Neglect of the closet is the beginning of backsliding, and the end of happiness and peace.

3. *Study of the Bible.* In the chapter devoted expressly to this subject, I have mentioned a variety of methods by which the study of the Bible may be made more interesting and profitable than it now ordinarily is. Every young Christian ought to allot a specific and regular time, every Sabbath day, to the systematic study of the Bible by some such methods as those.

4. *Conversation.* The older and more intelligent members of a family may do much toward causing the day to pass pleasantly and profitably, by making some effort to prepare subjects for conversation. Suppose a family take such a course as this:—A *daughter*, studying the Bible alone in her chamber, finds some difficult and yet interesting question

arising from the passage she is investigating. "I will ask about it at dinner," she says; "my brothers and sisters will be interested in the question, and in father's answer; for perhaps he will be able to answer it." The *mother* is reading some Christian biography, and coming to an interesting passage, she says to herself, "I will relate this story at dinner to-day, it will interest the children." The *father* inquires mentally, as the dinner hour approaches, "What shall we talk about to-day?" Perhaps he recollects some occurrence which has taken place during the week, which illustrates some religious truth, or is an example of religious duty. Thus each one comes to the table prepared to contribute something to the common stock of conversation. The dinner-hour, in such a case, will not pass heavily; all will be interested and profited by the remarks which will be made on the various topics which will come up. If any family into which this book may come, will really try this experiment, they will find in a very short time, that subjects for conversation will occur in far greater numbers, and excite much greater interest than they would at first have supposed. There may even be an agreement made at breakfast, that each one of the family will endeavor to bring forward some fact or some question at dinner, and then the father may call upon all in turn.

A great many persons imagine that conversation is something that must be left entirely to itself—that there can be no preparation for it, and no arrangements made to secure interest and profit from it. But the truth is, if there is any thing which demands forethought and arrangement, it is this very business of conversation—especially religious conversation on the Sabbath. Without some such efforts as I have above described, the Christian family, when assembled at dinner or tea, must spend the time in silence, or in making frivolous remarks, such as criticisms upon the preacher, or such discussions as keep those who are conscientious constantly un-

Public worship.

easy, because they doubt whether the subjects upon which they are speaking are suitable to the sacredness of the Lord's-day.

Many persons have no idea of religious conversation, excepting a forced and formal exhortation from the master of the family, or from a Christian minister. They can not understand how a whole family can be interested, from the aged grandparent down to the youngest child, in a conversation exactly calculated to promote the objects of the Sabbath. But let such persons make the simple experiment described above, and they will discover their mistake. The ways by which a family may be interested by means of judicious and ingenious efforts on the part of a parent or an older brother or sister, are very numerous. Sometimes a question may be proposed in regard to duty. A case may be imagined, or some real case which has actually occurred may be stated, and the question may be asked, what ought to be done in such a case? Or some question may be proposed for discussion, I do not mean for formal argument as in a parliamentary assembly, but for free interchange of opinion.

5. *Public Worship.* It is surprising how strong a tendency there is among mankind, and even among Christians, to throw off the whole responsibility of public worship upon the minister. The disposition is almost universal. Come with me into this church and observe the congregation assembled. The minister reads a hymn, and while he is reading it, how great a proportion of the hearers are entirely regardless of its contents! He rises to offer a prayer, and if we could see the hearts of those present, how many we should find who are really making no effort at all to accompany him to the throne of grace. At last he names his text; and the eyes of almost all the assembly are turned toward him. As he looks over the congregation he sees an expression of interest upon the countenances of his hearers, and perhaps expects that they are going to listen to what he has to say

Responsibilities of the hearers.

The farmer and his boys.

He begins the delivery of his message, endeavoring to explain to his hearers the principles of duty, or to present the considerations which should urge them to do it. Now let me ask, while this exercise is going forward, upon whom does the responsibility of it chiefly come? Is it the duty of a minister to interest the people, or that of the people to be interested, by means of their own efforts to give heed to the message which the minister brings? Are you, in receiving a message from above, to reject it, or to listen to it carelessly and with an inattentive and listless air, because it is not presented to you in such a manner as *to compel you*, by the novelty of its illustrations or the beauty of its diction, to give it your regard?

A farmer sends his boys into a field to spend the day in work. He directs them what to do for an hour, and says that after that time he shall send a man to explain to them how they are to proceed through the day. The boys go on with their work, until at length the expected messenger appears. He begins to tell them how the land is to be plowed, or in what way the father wishes the seed to be put into the ground. The boys listen to him a minute or two, until one, perceiving some oddity in the man's manner, bursts into a laugh; another sits down on a green bank under a tree, and gradually falls into a state of drowsy insensibility; a



THE INATTENTIVE HEARERS.

Duty of the hearers to be interested.

third looks away with vacant countenance upon the hills and mountains around, utterly regardless of the message. The boys consequently do not learn what their father wishes them to do, and do not do it ; and when night comes, and they are called to account in respect to the labors of the day, they attempt to justify themselves with this preposterous excuse: "Why," they say to their father, "the man that you sent us was not an interesting man, and so we did not pay any attention to his message. He had no talent at making his mode of explanation novel and striking and so we did not listen to it." "I could not possibly fix my attention," says one. "He was a very sleepy talker," says another ; "I could not keep awake." "He dressed so," says a third, "and he had such a tone of voice that I could not help laughing at him."

Such are the excuses which many persons give for not giving heed to religious instructions on the Sabbath. They attempt to throw off all responsibility upon the minister ; and if he does not awaken, by the power of his genius, an interest in their minds, they consider themselves entirely excused from feeling any. They say in substance to themselves, "We know that we have disobeyed God, and that he is sending us messengers to communicate to us the offers of forgiveness for the past and direction for the future ; but unless he sends us agreeable, and ingenious, and eloquent men, we will pay no attention to any of them."

Who can stand in the judgment with such an excuse ? And yet it is the actual feeling of thousands. But, my reader, I do urge you to abandon altogether this plan of throwing off upon the minister whom Providence has sent to you, the responsibility of the interest you take in public instruction. It is *his* duty to deliver his message plainly and intelligibly, but it is *your* duty, most unquestionably, to be interested in it. Go to the meeting, feeling that you have *something to do* there. You must be interested in what

Sinister motives at church.Way to detect them.

you hear, if it is a plain exhibition of religious truth ; and you must apply it to your own conscience and heart by real active effort, or you must incur the guilt of rejecting the message from heaven. The less interesting the preacher then is, the more active and the more arduous is the duty of his hearers. They should look him steadily in the face, and listen in silence and in deep attention to what he has to say ; and feel at all times, that while it is the minister's duty to be faithful in delivering his message, it is their most imperious duty to *take heed how they hear*.

There are a great many persons who are very constant in their attendance upon public worship, and who think that their motive is respect for religion, and a desire to obey God's commands ; when in fact they are controlled by other motives altogether. I do not mean by this that they attend public worship, and sustain by their influence the ordinances of religion, through a distinct and deliberate design of merely promoting, in some way, their own worldly interest by it. Actual, intentional hypocrisy, is a means which few men will knowingly adopt to accomplish their purposes. It is of so mean and base a quality, that even the honorable principles of this world are usually sufficient to preserve the breasts of men from its pollution. It is degrading and humiliating to admit it, knowingly and voluntarily, as a principle of action. The great danger which we have to fear is from a hypocrisy, or something nearly allied to it, which comes in secrecy or disguise. It is not always an easy thing for us to decide by what motives we are governed in the actions which we perform. We are often swayed by inducements, of which, without rigid and impartial scrutiny, we are entirely unconscious ; for there may be one motive of fair and honorable appearance, which stands out in the view of the individual as the director of his actions ; and there may be another of far different character, which in reality guides him, but which

is coiled up like a mainspring, in a secret place, and thus eludes his observation. The Bible, when it teaches us that the heart is deceitful above all things, teaches us nothing which an unbiased observation of human nature will not everywhere confirm.

Now this sort of hypocrisy in disguise is very apt to be the inducement which influences men in the duties connected with public worship. We assemble with the congregation on the Sabbath ostensibly to join in the devotions, and to listen to the sermon, as if our motive were an honest desire to promote our spiritual improvement; and yet all the time it is, in fact, very probable that we are not actuated by any such motive at all. We go to the house of God because it is customary to go there, or because people will censure us if we do not go. Or for the purpose of seeing those whom we expect to meet there, or for some other end totally unconnected with the great design which the public services of the sanctuary were intended to subserve. We walk into the assembly with a very devout and reverent air. We assume humble postures and attitudes of worship, and appear to the eyes of our fellow-men, very intent upon the duties before us, while in fact our thoughts are turned wholly aside from the duty which we pretend to be performing. This is hypocrisy; and however much we might be displeased at being pronounced hypocrites by others, we are, in fact, really hypocrites, and our hypocrisy too, is of almost precisely the same type with that so terribly condemned by our Savior in his denunciations of the Pharisaic Jews.

Let me urge my readers then to be careful *how* they perform the duties of public worship. The responsibility of being interested in them, and profited by them, comes upon you alone. You can not throw it off upon your minister. Examine yourself with reference to the spirit and feelings with which these duties are performed. They afford you a

Appearance of evil.

An example.

very fine opportunity for close and faithful self-examination, for the sinister motives which, in a greater or less degree, undoubtedly exist in your hearts, will show themselves here.

There is one thing more that I ought to present to the consideration of my readers before closing the chapter on this subject. It is this :

In keeping the Sabbath, avoid all appearance of evil. I have endeavored in this discussion to accomplish two objects. First, to convince my readers that the mere form and manner in which the Sabbath is kept, except so far as it is a matter of express command, is not material ; and secondly, to convey to the mind a distinct idea of what I understand to be the spirit of the command, and to persuade all my readers to aim at producing, by the best means within their reach, upon their own hearts and lives, the effect which God had intended in the establishment of the institution. From these views of the subject, were I stop here, it might seem that if we take such a course as shall really secure our own religious improvement on the Sabbath, we may do it in any way ; for example, that we may walk, or ride, or visit, provided that we so regulate and control our thoughts and conversation as to make the spiritual improvement which it is the object of the day to secure. But no. We must avoid the *appearance of evil*. We must not *seem* to be breaking or disregarding God's commands, or do that which will give pain to Christian friends, whose views may be somewhat different from ours.

For example. A Christian living on the sea-shore, after having spent the day in the various duties which have presented themselves to his attention, stands at the door of his house and looks out upon the glassy surface of the bay which stretches before him. It is a summer evening. The sun is just setting, throwing its bright beams over the water, and gilding every object upon which it shines. The Christian looks over this scene of beauty, and its expression of

The summer evening.

A walk.

Walking, riding, sailing.

calmness and peace is transferred to his own soul. He *feels* the presence of God in it all, and rejoices in the power and goodness of the great Being who reigns in every scene of beauty or of grandeur which nature exhibits.

With his heart filled with such thoughts, he walks down upon the beach to indulge in the contemplation of God's goodness to mankind and to him. Now he is, it must be admitted, while doing this, accomplishing the object of the Sabbath by meditation on the character of God. He may say perhaps that his views of divine goodness and power are more distinct and vivid while he is walking out among the beauties of nature, if his heart is in a right state, than they would be if he were shut up in his study. Why then may he not walk out at evening?

And why may he not step into the little boat which floats in the cove, and unloose its chain and push himself off from the shore, that while rocked by the gentle, dying swell of the sea, he may lose himself more completely in the absorbing feeling of God's presence, and muse more uninterruptedly upon his Creator's power? Shall he go?

No; stop, Christian, stop. Before you spend your half-hour in a boat upon the water, or even in your evening walk, consider what will be the influence of the example you are going to set to others. Shall you *appear*, while you are doing this, to be remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy? Is it best, on the whole, that riding, walking, and sailing should be among the occupations of holy time? Will God be honored and his Sabbath kept if *all* spend the Sabbath evening as you are about to spend it?

These questions must be answered on a principle which will apply to multitudes of other cases. Take a course which, *were it universally imitated*, would promote the greatest good; otherwise you may be doing that which, though safe for yourself, will be of incalculable injury, through the influence of your example, upon others.

CHAPTER X.

TRIAL AND DISCIPLINE.

“Strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

I. NATURE OF TRIAL.

THE Bible everywhere conveys the idea that this life is not our home, but is a state of probation, that is, of *trial and discipline*, which is intended to prepare us for another. In order that all, even the youngest of my readers, may understand what is meant by this, I shall illustrate it by some familiar examples drawn from the actual business of life.

When a large steamboat is built with the intention of having her employed upon the waters of a great river, she must be *proved* before put to service. Before trial, it is somewhat doubtful whether she will succeed. In the first place, it is not absolutely certain whether her machinery will work at all. There may be some flaw in the iron, or an imperfection in some part of the workmanship, which will prevent the motion of her wheels. Or if this is not the case, the power of the machinery may not be sufficient to propel her through the water with such force as to overcome the current; or she may, when brought to encounter the rapids at some narrow passage in the stream, not be able to force her way against their resistance.

The engineer therefore resolves to *try* her in all these respects, that her security and her power may be properly proved before she is intrusted with her valuable cargo of

human lives. He cautiously builds a fire under her boiler ; he watches with eager interest the rising of the steam-gage, and scrutinizes every part of the machinery as it gradually comes under the control of the tremendous power which he is gradually applying. With what interest does he observe the first stroke of the ponderous piston !—and when at length the fastenings of the boat are let go, and the motion is communicated to the wheels, and the mighty mass slowly moves away from the land, how deep and eager an interest does he feel in all her movements and in every indication he can discover of her future success !

The engine, however, works imperfectly, as every one must on its first trial ; and the object in this experiment is not to gratify idle curiosity by seeing that the boat will move, but to discover and remedy every little imperfection, and to remove every obstacle which prevents more entire success. For this purpose you will see our engineer examining, most minutely and most attentively, every part of her complicated machinery. The crowd on the shore may be simply gazing on her majestic progress, as she moves over the water, but the engineer is within, looking with faithful examination into all the minutiae of the motion. He scrutinizes the action of every lever and the friction of every joint ; here he oils a bearing, there he tightens a nut ; one part of the machinery has too much play, and he confines it—another too much friction, and he loosens it ; now he stops the engine, now reverses her motion, and again sends the boat forward in her course. He discovers, perhaps, some great improvement of which she is susceptible, and when he returns to the wharf and has extinguished the fire, he orders from the machine-shop the necessary alteration.

The next day he puts his boat to the trial again, and she glides over the water more smoothly and swiftly than before. The jar which he had noticed is gone, and the friction re-

Final results.Her power.

duced ; the beams play more smoothly, and the alteration which he has made produces a more equable motion in the shaft, or gives greater effect to the stroke of the paddles upon the water.

When at length her motion is such as to satisfy him, upon the smooth surface of the river, he turns her course, we will imagine, towards the rapids, to see how she will sustain a greater trial. As he increases the steam, to give the engine power to overcome the new force with which she has to contend, he watches, with eager interest, the boiler, inspects the gage and the safety-valves, and from the movements of the boat under the increased pressure of her steam he receives suggestions for further improvements, or for precautions which will insure greater safety. These he executes, and thus he perhaps goes on for many days, or even weeks, trying and examining, for the purpose of improvement, every working of that mighty power, to which he knows hundreds of lives are soon to be intrusted. This now is probation—*trial for the sake of improvement*. And what are its results? Why, after this course has been thoroughly and faithfully pursued, this floating palace receives upon her broad deck, and in her carpeted and curtained cabins, her four or five hundred passengers, who pour in, in one long procession of happy groups, over the bridge of planks ;—father and son—mother and children—young husband and wife—all with implicit confidence trusting themselves and their dearest interest to her power. See her as she sails away—how beautiful and yet how powerful are all her motions! That beam glides up and down gently and smoothly in its grooves, and yet gentle as it seems, hundreds of horses could not hold it still ; there is no apparent violence, but every movement is made with almost irresistible power. How graceful is her form, and yet how mighty is the momentum with which she presses on her way. Loaded with life, and

Safe and successful action.



THE STEAMBOAT.

herself the very symbol of life and power, she seems something ethereal—unreal, which, ere we look again, will have vanished away. And though she has within her bosom a furnace glowing with furious fires, and a reservoir of death—the elements of most dreadful ruin and conflagration—of destruction the most complete, and agony the most unutterable ; and though her strength is equal to the united energy of two thousand men, she restrains it all. She was constructed by genius, and has been *tried* and improved by fidelity and skill ; and one man governs and controls her, stops her and sets her in motion, turns her this way and that, as easily and certainly as the child guides the gentle lamb. She walks over the hundred and sixty miles of her route without rest and without fatigue ; and the passengers, who have slept in safety in their berths, with destruction by

Life a time of trial.

water without, and by fire within, always at hand—and defended only by a plank from the one, and by a sheet of copper from the other, land at the appointed time in safety.

My reader, you have, within you, susceptibilities and powers of which you have little present conception,—energies which are hereafter to operate in producing either fullness of enjoyment, or horrors of suffering of which you now but little conceive. You are now on *trial*. God wishes you to prepare yourself for safe and happy action. He wishes you to look within, to examine the complicated movements of your heart, to detect what is wrong, to modify what needs change, and rectify every irregular motion. You go out to try your moral powers upon the stream of active life, and then return to retirement, to improve what is right and remedy what is wrong. Renewed opportunities of moral practice are given you, that you may go on from strength to strength until every part of the complicated moral machinery of which the human heart consists, will work as it ought to work, and is prepared to accomplish the mighty purposes for which your powers are designed. You are *on trial*—*on probation* now. You will enter upon *active service* in another world.

In order, however, that the end and design of probation may be more perfectly understood, let us consider more particularly the difference between the condition of the boat I have described, when she was *on trial*, and when she was afterward *in actual service*. While she was on trial she sailed this way and that, merely for the purpose of ascertaining her powers and her deficiencies, in order that the former might be increased, and the latter remedied. The engineer steered her to the rapids, we supposed; but it was not because he particularly wished to pass the rapids, but only to try the power of the boat upon them. Perhaps with the same design he might run along a curved or indented shore,—pene-

Trials of childhood.

trating deep into creeks, or sweeping swiftly round projecting headlands; and this, not because he wishes to examine that shore, but only to see how the boat will obey her helm. Thus he goes on placing her again and again in situations of difficulty, for the purpose simply of proving her powers, and enabling him to perfect the operation of her machinery. Afterward, when she has come into actual service, when she has received her load, and is transporting it to its place of destination, the object is entirely changed; *service*, not improvement, is then the aim. Her time of trial is ended.

The Bible everywhere considers this world as one of *trial and discipline*, introductory to another one, which is to be the world of actual service. A child, as he comes forward into life, is surrounded with difficulties which might easily have been avoided if the Ruler over all had wished to avoid them. But he did not. That child is on trial—moral trial; and just exactly as the helmsman of the steamboat steered her to the rapids for the purpose of bringing her into difficulty, so does God arrange in such a manner the circumstances of childhood and youth as to bring the individual into various difficulties which will try his moral powers, and which, if the child does his duty, will be the means of improving them. He may learn contentment and submission by the thousand disappointments which occur, patience and fortitude by his various sufferings, and perseverance by encountering the various obstacles which oppose his progress. These difficulties, and sufferings, and obstacles might all have easily been avoided. God might have so formed the human mind, and so arranged the circumstances of life, that every thing should have gone smoothly with us. But he wishes for these things as *trials*—trials for the sake of our improvement; and he has filled life with them, from the cradle to the grave.

To obtain a distinct idea of the operation of this principle

The child and the forbidden book.

Command.

Pain.

let us look at this little child. She is just able to walk about the floor of her mother's parlor, and though her life is full of sources of happiness, it is full likewise of sources of disappointment and suffering. A moment since she was delighted with a plaything which her mother had given her, but now she has laid it aside, and is advancing toward a valuable book which lies upon the chair. She is just reaching out her little arm to take it, when she is arrested by her mother's well-known voice :

“ Mary ! Mary, you must not touch the book.”

A child as young as this will understand language though she can not use it, and she will obey commands. She looks steadily at her mother a moment with an inquiring gaze, as if uncertain whether she heard aright. The command is repeated :

“ No, Mary must not touch the book.”

The child, I will suppose, has been taught to obey, but in such a case as this it is a hard duty. Her little eyes fill with tears, which perhaps she makes an effort to drive away, and soon seeks amusement elsewhere. Now, if such a child has been managed right, she will be improved by such a *trial*. The principle of obedience and submission will have been strengthened ; it will be easier for her to yield to parental command on the next occasion.

But see, as she totters along back to her mother, she trips over her little footstool and falls to the floor. The terror and pain, though *we* should only smile at it, are sufficient to overwhelm her entirely. Her mother gently raises her, endeavors to soothe and quiet her, and soon you can distinctly perceive that the child is struggling to repress her emotions. Her sobs are gradually restrained, the tears flow less freely, and soon the sunshine of a smile breaks over her face, and she jumps down again to play. This now has been a useful

Advantage of trial in childhood.

trial ; pain and fright have once been conquered, and they will have less power over her in future.

But though there is a real and most important benefit to be derived from these trials of infancy, the child herself can not understand it. No child can become prepared for the future duties of life without them, and yet no child, of such an age, can understand why they are necessary. The mother might say to her, in attempting to explain it, as follows :

“ Mary, I might save you from all these difficulties and troubles if I chose. I might put you in a room where every thing was cushioned so that you could not hurt yourself, and I might keep carefully out of your sight every article which you ought not to have. Thus you might be saved from all your pains and disappointments. But I choose not to do this. I wish to prepare you to become useful and happy hereafter, and you must accordingly learn submission, and patience, and fortitude now. So I leave the book in the chair, where you can see it, and then tell you that you must not touch it. And I leave you to fall a little now and then ; for the pain only continues for a moment ; but if you try to conquer your fears and bear the pain patiently, it will do you lasting good. By these means your character will acquire firmness and vigor, and you will thus be prepared for the duties of future life.”

The child now would not understand all this, but it would be true, whether she should understand it or not, and the judicious mother, who knows what is the design of education and the manner in which children are to be trained up to future duty, will not be unwilling to have her children repeatedly *tried*. These repeated trials are the very means of forming their characters, and were it possible to avoid them entirely, instead of meeting and conquering them, the child, exposed to such a course of treatment, would be ruined.

Putting playthings out of reach.

Conversation with a mother.

Sometimes parents seem to make efforts to avoid them, and in going into such a family you will find the shovel and tongs, perhaps, placed upon the mantelpiece, so that the children can not touch them, and the mother will not dare to bring a plate of cake into the room for fear that they should cry for it. Instead of accustoming them to trials of this kind, and teaching them obedience and submission, she makes a vain effort to remove all occasion for the exercise of self-denial. If, perchance, these remarks are read by any mother who feels that she is pursuing the course which they condemn, I would stop a moment to say to her as follows :

Do you expect that you can govern your children for fifteen years to come in this way ? Can you put every thing, which, during all this period, they shall want, and which they ought not to have, out of their way upon some mantelpiece, as you do the shovel and tongs ?

“ No,” you reply, smiling, “ I do not expect to do it. My child will soon become older, and then I can teach him obedience more easily.”

You never afterward can teach him obedience so easily as when he *is first able to understand a simple command*, and that is long before he is able to walk. And there is no way by which obedience and submission can be so effectually taught to child or to man as by actual trial. That is the way in which God teaches it to you, and that is the way in which you ought to teach it to your child. God never puts sin away out of our reach ; he leaves it all around us, and teaches us by actual trial to resist its calls.

“ I know this is right,” you reply ; “ but sometimes I am busy—I am engaged in important duties, and do not wish to be interrupted ; and on such occasions I remove improper playthings out of the reach of my child, because, *just then*, I have not time to teach him a lesson of obedience.”

But what important business is that which you put into

Trials not to be shunned.

competition with the whole character and happiness of your child ? If your sons or your daughters grow up in habits of disobedience to your commands, they will embitter your life, and bring down your gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. You never afterward can gain an ascendancy over them so easily as in infancy—and you can not in any other way so effectually undermine your power, and prevent yourself from ever obtaining an ascendancy over them, as by accustoming them in childhood to understand that, in your endeavors to keep them from doing what is wrong, you do not aim at strengthening their own moral principle, and accustoming them to meet and to resist the ordinary temptations of life, but that you depend upon a vain effort to remove them entirely away from trial ; so that if you could succeed, you render it equally impossible for them to do right or wrong.

Yes ; trial is essential in childhood, and God has so arranged the circumstances of early life, that parents can not evade it. It must come. It may be removed in a very few cases, but that only occasions additional difficulty in those that remain ; and it is far better not to attempt to evade it at all. Come up then, parents, boldly to the work of accustoming your children to trial. If you see a child going toward an open door, do not hasten to shut it so that he can not go out ; command him not to go, and enforce obedience ; if you do any thing to the door at all, throw it wide open, and say mildly, “I will see whether you will disobey.” Do not put the book or the paper which you do not wish him to touch high upon a shelf, away from his reach ; if you change its place at all, place it fully within his reach, and direct him not to touch it. Remember that youth is a season of probation and trial, and unless you avail yourself of the opportunities of probation and trial which it presents, you lose half the advantages which the Creator had in view in arranging the circumstances of childhood as they are.

Instruction and practice.The merchant's plan for his son.

Now the whole of life is, equally with the years of childhood, a time of probation and trial ; it is filled up with difficulties and obstacles, and sources of slight disappointment and suffering, for the very purpose of trying and increasing our moral strength. And all these things are, or may be, sources of enjoyment. They will be sources of enjoyment if we take the right view of them, as I shall explain more fully hereafter. God has so arranged it, that we have, in passing through life, a specimen of almost every sort of moral difficulty : and every moral power of the heart may be brought into active exercise, and cherished and strengthened by the trial, if the opportunity is rightly improved.

God has therefore made a double provision for the moral growth of men. First, he has given us *instruction* in our duty in the Bible ; and secondly, he has given us *opportunity for practice*, in the various difficulties and duties of life. The Bible is full and complete as a book of directions. Human life is full and complete as a field for practice. The best parade-ground for drilling and disciplining an army would not be a smooth and level plain, but an irregular region, diversified with hills and plains, where the inexperienced army would be compelled to perform every evolution—now passing a defile, now ascending an acclivity, now constructing and crossing a bridge. So human life, to answer the purposes intended as a field for moral exercise, must present a variety of difficulties, to enable us to practice every virtue, and to bring into active requisition every right principle of heart.

A wealthy man, I will suppose, being engaged in commercial pursuits in a great city, wished to prepare his son to manage his business when he should be old enough to take charge of it. He accordingly gave him a thorough commercial education in school ; but before he received him into his partnership, he thought it would be necessary to give him some practical knowledge of his future duties.

A voyage of difficulty.

Its design.

"My son," says he to himself, "is now theoretically acquainted with all that is necessary, but he wants the readiness, and the firmness, and the confidence of practice. To complete his education, I will give him a thorough trial. I will fit out a small vessel, and let him take charge of her cargo. I will so plan the voyage, that it shall embrace an unusual share of difficulty and trial; for my very design is to give him practical knowledge and skill, which come only through such a trial."

He accordingly fits out his ship. He thinks very little of the success of the voyage in a pecuniary point of view, because that is not his object. He rejects one port of destination, because it is too near; another, because the passage to it is short and direct; and another, because the disposal of a cargo there is attended with no difficulty. He at last thinks of a voyage which will answer his design. The passage lies through a stormy sea. Rocks and quicksands, and perhaps pirates, fill it with dangers. The port at which he will arrive is one distinguished by the intricacy of its government regulations. His son is a stranger to the language of the country, and a great discretionary power will be necessary in the selection of a return cargo. This, says the merchant, is exactly the plan. This voyage will comprehend more difficulties, and dangers, and trials than any other, and will, accordingly, be exactly the thing for my son.

Perhaps you may say that a father would not form such a design as this—he would not willingly expose his son to so many difficulties and dangers merely for the sake of putting him to trial. This is true. No real father would probably go as far as I have represented the imaginary merchant to go; but the reason why he would not, would be the doubt which he would necessarily feel whether his son would safely pass through the trial. He would not, for example, send his son among rocks and whirlpools, for the sake of getting him

Its design and effects.

into danger, because he would fear that that danger might result in death. If, however, he could be sure of ultimate safety—if, for example, he could, as our great Father in heaven can do, go along with his boy, and though unseen and unheard, keep constantly at his side in every danger, with power to bring effectual protection—if earthly fathers had such power as this, there would be a thousand who would take the course above described. They would see that there could be nothing so well calculated to give maturity and efficiency to the character, and to prepare the young man for persevering fidelity and eminent success in his future business, as such a discipline as this.

Let us go on then with the supposition. The young man at length sets sail. He understands the object of his father in planning the voyage, and he goes forth to prosecute it with a cordial desire of making it the means of promoting his improvement as far as possible. Instead of being displeased that a plan embracing so many difficulties and trial had been chosen for him, he rejoices in it. He certainly would rejoice in it, if he had confidence in his father's protection. When he comes into the stormy ocean through which he has to pass, instead of murmuring at the agitated sea and gloomy sky, he stands upon the deck, riding from billow to billow, thinking of his father's presence and confiding in his protection, and growing in moral strength and fortitude every hour. The gale increases, and the fury of the storm tries his nerve to the utmost; but he does not regret its violence, or wish to quiet a single surge. He knows that it is his *trial*, and rejoices in it, and when through his increasing moral strength he has triumphed over its power, he stands contemplating its fury, with a spirit quiet and undisturbed. At length the wind lulls; the clouds break away, and the bright rays of the setting sun beam upon the dripping sails and rigging; the waves subside; a steady breeze carries the ship forward smoothly

The uses of trial.

Self-knowledge.

on her course ; and he who has been enduring the discipline of the scene feels that he has made progress—that he has taken now one great step toward the accomplishment of the object of his voyage.

Christian ! God has planned just such a voyage for you. He has filled it with difficulties and trials, that you may by means of them, discipline and perfect all your moral powers. When, therefore, the dark, gloomy storm rises upon you, and night shuts in, and danger presses, and your heart feels itself burdened with a load which it can scarcely sustain, never repine at it. Think how near is your protector. Confide in him, and remember that your present voyage is one of *trial*.

II. THE USES OF TRIAL.

I think it must be thus very evident to all who reflect properly upon this subject, that it is of immense advantage to moral beings, who are to be trained up to virtue, and to firmness of principle and of character, that they should not only receive instruction in duty, but that they should be put upon trial, to acquire by actual experience a firm and steady habit of correct moral action. This can, however, be made more clear, if I analyze more particularly the effects of such trial upon the heart.

1. *It enables us to know ourselves.* People never know their own characters till they are tried. We often condemn very severely other persons for doing what, if we had been placed in their circumstances, we should have done ourselves. "Ye know not what spirit ye are of," said the Savior. Very few persons know what spirit they are of, until an hour of temptation brings forth the latent propensities of the heart into action. How will a revengeful spirit slumber unseen in a man's bosom, and his face be covered with smiles, till some slight insult or indignity calls it forth, and makes him at once

The deceived mother.

the victim of ungovernable passion ! Yes ; trial reveals to us our true character.

It brings to light the traits of Christian character which would not be understood at all without it. I have a case in mind, which I will describe, which is a very common case, precisely as I describe it here ; so common, that very probably a great many of my readers may consider it as their own.

A Christian mother had an only child whom she ardently loved. The mother was an influential member of the church, and was ardently interested in maintaining a high Christian character, and studying, faithfully and perseveringly, religious truth. She became much interested in the view which the Bible presents of the Divine Sovereignty ; she used to dwell with delight upon the contemplation of God's universal power over all ; she used to rejoice, as she thought, in his entire authority over her ; she took pleasure in reflecting that she was completely in his hands, soul and body, for time and for eternity, and she wondered that any person could find any source of difficulty or embarrassment in the Scripture representations on this subject.

But she did not know her heart. Her beloved child was sick—and she stood anxious and agitated over her pillow, very far from showing a cordial willingness that God should rule. She was afraid, very much afraid, that her child would die. Instead of having that practical belief in the divine sovereignty, and that cordial confidence in God, which would have given her in this trying hour a calm and happy acquiescence in the divine will, she was restless and uneasy —her soul had no peace, morning or night. Her daughter sank, by a progress which was slow, but irresistible, to the grave, and for weeks that mother was in utter misery because she could not find it in her heart to submit to the divine will. She had believed in the universal power of

The engineer was watchful.

Means of improvement.

God as a theoretical truth ; she had seen its abstract beauty ; she thought that she rejoiced in God's superintending power, but it was only while all went well with her ; as soon as God began to exercise that power which she had so cordially acknowledged and rejoiced in, in a way which was painful to her, her heart rose against it in a moment, and would not submit. The trial brought out to her view her true feelings in regard to the absolute and unbounded authority of God. Now, there is a great deal of such acquiescence in God's dominion as this in the world, and a great deal of it is exposed by *trial* every day.

The case of the steam-engine, which I supposed at the commencement of this chapter, illustrates this part of my subject exactly. The engineer *tried* the boat for the purpose of learning fully the character and operation of her machinery. Though he had actually himself superintended the construction of every part of the work, he could not fully understand the character and the power of the machine until he had tried it. While the experiment was making, he was watching every movement with a most scrutinizing eye ; he discovered faults, or deficiencies, or imperfections, which nothing but actual trial could have revealed.

It is on exactly the same principle that discipline and trial are useful, to enable us fully to understand our characters ; and in order to avail ourselves of this advantage, we should watch ourselves most carefully, when placed in any new or untried situation, to see how our moral powers are affected by it. We must notice every imperfection and every deficiency which the trial brings to our view.

2. *Discipline and trial are the means of improvement.* Besides giving us an insight into our characters, they will, if properly improved, enable us to advance in the attainment of every excellence. I ought however, perhaps, to say they *may be made* the means of improvement, rather than that

The Christian boy going to school.

they actually will be so. The steamboat was in a better condition after the first day's trial than before ; but it was because the engineer was attentive and watchful, doing his utmost to avail himself of every opportunity to increase the smoothness and the power of her motion. So with human trials.

See yonder child going to school. His slate is under his arm, and he is going this day to make an attempt to understand long division. He is young, and the lesson, though it may seem simple to us, is difficult to him. He knows what difficulty and perplexity are before him, and he would, perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, shrink from the hard task. But he is a Christian. He has asked forgiveness for his past sins in the name of Jesus Christ, and is endeavoring to live in such a manner as to please his Father above. He knows that God might easily have formed his mind so that mathematical truths and processes might be plain to him at once, and that he has not done so, for the very purpose of giving him a useful discipline by the trial which the effort to learn them necessarily brings.

He says therefore to himself as he walks along to his school-room, " My lesson to-day is not only to understand this process, but to learn to be patient and faithful in duty, and I must learn the arithmetical and the moral lesson together. I will try to



THE SCHOOL-BOY.

The moral and arithmetical question.

do it. I will begin my work, looking to God for help, and I will go on through it, if I can, with a calm and quiet spirit, so as to learn not only to *divide a number*, but to *persevere in duty*." With this spirit he sits down to his work, and watches himself narrowly, that he may check every rising of impatience, and obtain, by means of the very difficulties that now try him, a greater self-command than he ever before possessed. In fact he takes a strong interest in the very difficulty, because he is interested in the moral experiment which it enables him to make.

Now, when such a spirit as this is cherished, and the mind is under its influence in all the difficulties and trials of life, how rapidly must the heart advance in every excellence! There certainly can be no other way by which a young person can so effectually acquire a patient and persevering spirit, as by meeting real difficulties with such a state of mind as I have described. They who have been trained in the hard school of difficulty and trial, almost always possess a firmness of character which it is in vain to look for elsewhere. There must, however, be effort on the part of the individual to improve the trial, or he will grow worse instead of better by it. The learning of simple division in school is, perhaps, as often a means of promoting an impatient and fretful spirit as the contrary. It is the disposition on the part of the individual, that determines which effect is to be the result. Some men, by the misfortunes and crosses of life, are made misanthropes; others, by the same disappointments and sufferings, are made humble and happy Christians, with feelings kindly disposed toward their fellow-men, and calmly submissive toward God.

The object, then, which the Creator has had in view, in arranging the circumstances of probation and discipline in which we are placed, is two-fold: that we may *understand*, and that we may *improve* our characters. We are to learn

Practical directions.

different lessons from the different circumstances and situations in which we are placed, but we are to learn some lesson from all. God might easily have so formed the earth, and so arranged our connection with it, as to save us from all the vicissitudes, and trials, and changes which we now experience. But he has made this world a state of discipline and trial for us, that we may have constant opportunities to call into active exercise every Christian grace. The future world is the home for which we are intended, and we are placed on trial here, that we may prepare for it; and the suffering and sorrow which we experience on the way are small evils compared with the glorious results which we may hope for there. But I must come to the practical directions which I intended to present.

1. Consider every thing that befalls you as coming in the providence of God, and intended as a part of the system of discipline and trial through which you are to pass. This will help you to bear every thing patiently. An irreligious man is on a journey requiring special haste, and finds himself delayed by bad traveling or stormy weather, until a steamboat, which he had intended to have taken, has sailed, and left him behind. He spends the twenty-four hours during which he has to wait for the next boat, in fretting and worrying himself over his disappointment—in useless complaints against the driver for not having brought him on more rapidly—in wishing that the weather or traveling had been better—or in thinking how much his business must suffer by the delay. The Christian, on the other hand, hears the intelligence, that the boat has left him, with a quiet spirit; and even if he was hastening to the bedside of a dying child, he would spend the intervening day in composure and peace, saying, “The Lord has ordered this. It is intended to try me. Heavenly Father, give me grace to stand the trial.”

God's providence universal.

Losses of every kind from God.

I say, the Christian would feel thus ; I should, perhaps, have said, he ought to feel thus. Christians are very much accustomed to consider all the *great* trials and sufferings of life as coming from God, and as intended to try them, but they fret and vex themselves unceasingly in regard to the *little* difficulties which, in the ordinary walk of life, they have to encounter—especially in what is connected with the misconduct of others. You lend a valuable book, and it is returned to you spoiled ; the prints are soiled and worn ; the leaves are turned down in some places, and loosened in others ; the binding is defaced, and the back is broken. Now you ought not to stand looking at your spoiled volume, lamenting again and again the misfortune, and making yourselves miserable for hours by your fretfulness and displeasure against the individual who was its cause. He was indeed in fault, but if you did your duty in lending the book, as probably you did, you are in no sense responsible for the injury, and you do wrong to make yourself miserable about it. The occurrence comes to you in the providence of God, and is intended as a trial. He watches you to see how you bear it. If you meet it with a proper spirit, and learn the lesson of patience and forbearance which it brings, that spoiled book will do you more good than any splendid volume crowded with prints, adorned with gilded binding, and preserved in a locked cabinet for you for twenty years.

So with loss of every kind, whether it comes in the form of a broken piece of china, or a counterfeit ten-dollar bill found in the pocket-book, or the loss of your whole property by the misfortune of a partner or the pressure of the times. No matter what is the magnitude or the smallness of the loss —no matter whether it comes from the culpable negligence or fraud of another, or more directly from God, through the medium of flood or fire, or the lightning of heaven ; so far as it is a loss affecting you, it comes in the providence of

The careless engineer.

God, and is intended as a trial. If you are really interested in what ought to be the great business of life, your growth in grace, you will find that such trials will help you to understand your own heart, and to train it up to a proper action under the government of God, more than any thing beside.

2. Make it your aim to be continually learning the lessons which God by these various trials is endeavoring to teach you. Every day is a day of discipline and trial. Ask yourself every night then, "What progress have I made to-day?" Suppose that the engineer, in the case of the steamboat on trial, to which I have several times alluded, had neglected altogether the operation of the machinery when his boat was put to the test. Suppose that instead of examining minutely and carefully the structure and the action of the parts, with a view of removing difficulties, rectifying defects, and supplying deficiencies, he had been seated quietly upon the deck enjoying the sail. He might have been gazing at the scenery of the shore, or in vanity and self-complacency pleasing himself with the admiration which he imagined those who stood upon the land were feeling for the degree of success which he had already attained. While he is thus neglecting his duty, evils without number, and fraught with incalculable consequences, are working below. The defects in his machinery are not discovered and not remedied; its weaknesses remain unobserved and unrepaired; and if at last there should be intrusted to his care valuable property, nothing can reasonably be expected but its destruction.

Multitudes of men, and even great numbers of those who call themselves Christians, act the part of this infatuated engineer. God says to them that their moral powers are now on trial. He commands them to consider it their business here not to be engrossed in the objects of interest which surround them as they pass on through life, nor to be satisfied with present attainments of any kind, but to consider

Neglect of duty.

themselves as sailing now in troubled waters for the purpose of trial and improvement ; to watch themselves with constant self-examination, and with honest efforts to rectify what is wrong and to supply what is deficient. He requires them to consider *all* the circumstances and occurrences of life as coming from him, and as arranged with express reference to the attainment of these objects. Notwithstanding all this, however, they neglect the duty altogether. They do not watch themselves. They do not habitually and practically regard the events of life as means to enable them to understand their hearts, to strengthen, by constant exercise, moral principle, and to grow in grace. Instead of this, they are engaged in simply endeavoring to secure as much present enjoyment in this world as they can, and can see no good in any trial, and can get no good from it. When they are sick, they spend the time in longing to get well. When they are disappointed, they make themselves miserable by useless lamentations. Losses bring endless regrets ; and injuries, impatience and anger. Half of life is spent in these vexatious struggles—the vain and hopeless struggles of a weak man to get free from the authority and government of God.

I have now completed what I intended to present on the subject of probation ; and I think that all my readers will easily see, that by taking such a view of life as this subject presents to us, the whole aspect of our residence in this world is at once changed. If you really feel what I have been endeavoring to explain, you will regard yourselves as strangers and pilgrims here, looking continually forward to another country as your home. The thousand trials and troubles of life will lose half their weight by your regarding them in their true light, that is, as means of moral discipline and improvement. You must, however, make a constant effort to do this. Make it a part of your daily self-examina-

Concluding remarks.

tion not only to ascertain what is the state of your heart at the time when the examination was made, but to review the incidents of the day, and see how they have operated upon you as means of moral discipline. See what traits of character those incidents have brought to your view, and what effect they have had in making you worse or better than you were in the morning. The little events and circumstances of every day must have a very important influence of one kind or of the other. If you neglect this influence, all will go wrong. If you attend to it, it will go well and happily with you wherever you may be.

General improvement a Christian duty.

CHAPTER XI.

PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT.

“The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

THE chapters which the reader has just perused are on subjects connected with the improvement of the character: that is, they are upon the *means* by which this improvement is to be promoted. This studying of the Bible, the keeping of the Sabbath, and the influence of trial and discipline, are all intended to be means for the promotion of moral progress. There are some things, however, which I wish to say in regard to the *character itself* as it goes on in the process of improvement. Reader! do you desire to avail yourself of the opportunities and means which I have described? Do you wish to study the Bible, to remember the Sabbath, and to improve all the occurrences of life, as the means of promoting your progress in all that is good? If so, look now with me a little while into your character itself, that you may see in what respect it needs your attention, and in what way you can so employ the means which I have described, as to gain the fullest benefit from them. As I think that every young Christian ought most assiduously to cultivate his *moral*, and also his *intellectual* powers, I shall discuss in order both these points.

I. MORAL IMPROVEMENT.

EVERY young Christian will find, however sincerely and

Moral improvement.

Faults.

The vain boy.

ardently he may have given up his heart to God and commenced a life of piety, that a vast number of *faults* remain to be corrected—faults which he acquired while he lived in sin, and which the force of habit have fixed upon him. Now you know, or you may easily learn, what these faults are, and your first effort is to correct them.

In order now to make clear the course which I think ought to be taken to correct such faults, I will suppose a case, and bring into it the various methods which may be adopted for this purpose; and I shall write the account with a double aspect—one toward parents, with the design of showing them what sort of efforts they ought to make to correct the faults of their children, and the other toward the young, to show what measures they should adopt to improve *themselves*.

First, however, I will mention a very common, but a very ineffectual mode of attempting to correct faults. A father sees in his son some exhibition of childish vanity, and he says to him instantly, at the very time of the occurrence, “ You are acting in a very foolish manner.—You show a great deal of vanity and self-conceit by such conduct; and in fact I have observed that you are growing very vain for some months past; I don’t know what we shall do to correct it.”

The poor boy hangs his head and looks ashamed, and his father, talking about it a few minutes longer in a half irritated tone, dismisses and forgets the subject. The boy refrains, perhaps, from that particular exhibition of vanity for a little while, and that is probably all the good which results from the reproof.

Another wiser parent sees with regret the rising spirit of self-conceit in his son; and instead of rushing on to attack it without plan or design at the first momentary impulse, he resorts to a very different course. He notices several cases—remembers them—reflects that the evil, which has been

Way to reform him.

Conversation with his father.

forming perhaps for years, can not be corrected by a single abrupt reproof—and accordingly forms a plan for a protracted moral discipline in the case, and then seeks a favorable opportunity to execute it.



RIDING HOME.

One day, after the father has been granting his son some unusual indulgence, and they have spent the day happily together in some plan of enjoyment, and are riding home slowly in a pleasant summer evening, he thus addresses his son :

“ Well, Samuel, you have been a good boy, and we have had a pleasant time. Now I am going to give you

something to do, which, if you do it right, will wind up the day very pleasantly.”

“ What is it ? ” says Samuel.

“ I am not certain that it will please you, but you may do as you choose about undertaking it. It will not be pleasant at first ; the enjoyment will come afterward.”

Samuel. But what is it, father ? I think I shall like to do it.

Father. Do you think that you have any faults, Samuel ?

Samuel. Yes, sir, I know I have a great many.

Father. Yes, you have ; and all boys have. Some wish to correct them, and others do not. Now I have supposed that you *do* wish to correct your faults, and I had thought

Instances of vanity.

of describing one of them to you, and then telling you of a particular thing which you can do which will help you to correct it. But then it will not be very pleasant for you to sit here and have me find fault with you, and mention a number of instances in which you have done wrong, and particularize all the little circumstances which increased the guilt ; this, I say, will not be very pleasant, even though you know that my design is not to find fault with you, but to help you improve. But then if you undertake it, and after a little while find that you are really improving, then you will feel happier for the effort. Now consider both, and tell me whether you wish me to give you a fault to correct or not.

If the boy now has been under a kind, and gentle, but efficient government, he will almost certainly desire to have the fault, and the way by which he is to correct it, pointed out. If so, the father may proceed as follows :

Father. The fault that I am going to mention to you, is *vanity*. Now it is right for you to desire my approbation. It is right for you not only to do your duty, but to wish that others should know that you do it. I think, too, it is right for you to take pleasure in reflecting on your improvement, as you go on improving from year to year. But when you fancy your improvement to be greater than it is, or imagine that you have made great attainments, or when you obtrude some trifling merit upon the notice of strangers for the sake of exciting their admiration, you exhibit *vanity*. Now, did you know that you have this fault ?

Samuel. I do not know that I have thought of it particularly. I suppose, though, that I have it.

Father. That you have the fault now is of very little consequence, if you only take hold of it in earnest and correct it. It has grown up with you insensibly ; in fact, almost all children fall into it. I presume that I had as much vanity as you have, when I was as young. Do you think now that

The boy's list.

you can recollect any cases in which you have shown vanity ?

Samuel. I don't know ; perhaps I could if I should have a little time to think.

Father. Well, I will give you time to think, and if you really wish to correct yourself of the fault, you may think of all the cases you can, and tell me of them. If you prefer it, you may write the list and show it to me.

Now, if the subject is taken up in this spirit, most boys, who had been treated on these principles before, would receive the communication with pleasure, and would engage with interest in the work of exploring the heart. And such a boy will succeed. He will bring a list of instances, not perhaps fully detailed, but alluded to distinctly enough to recall them to mind. His list might be perhaps something as follows :

“ Dear Father,—I have made out a list of the times in which I was vain, and I now send it to you.

“ 1. I brought out my writing-book a few evenings ago, when some company was here, in hopes that the people would ask to see it.

“ 2. I said yesterday at table, that there was something in the lesson which none of the boys could recite until it came to me, and I recited it.

“ 3. I pretended to talk Latin with George when walking, thinking that you and the other gentlemen would overhear it.

“ I suppose I could think of many other cases if I had time. I am glad that you told me of the fault, for I think it a very foolish one, and I wish to correct it.

“ Your dutiful son,

Samuel.”

Now let me ask every one of my readers who has any

Effect of this confession.

Secret confession to be minute.

knowledge of human nature, whether, even if the effort of the father to correct this fault should stop here, a most powerful blow would not have been given to it. Do you think that a boy can make such a self-examination, and confess freely his faults in this manner, without making a real progress in forsaking them? Can he as easily, after this, attempt to display his accomplishments, or talk of his exploits?

The process ought not to stop here, but this is the first step; *confession*—full, free, and particular confession. In the first chapter I described the power of confession *to restore peace of mind*, after it is lost by sin; and in alluding to the subject of confession again here, it will be seen that I look to another aspect of it, namely, *its tendency to promote reformation*. It is in this latter respect only that I consider it now.

The first step then which any of you are to take in order to break the chains of any sinful habit which you have formed, is *to confess it fully and freely*. That single act will do more to give your fault its death-blow, than almost any thing else that you can do. If you are a child, you can derive great assistance from confessing your faults to your parents. If you shrink from talking with them face to face about your follies and faults, you can write to them. Or confess and express your determination to amend, to some confidential friend, of your own age; but above all, be sure to confess to God; lay the whole case before him in full detail. I can not press upon you too fully the necessity of being *distinct* and *definite*, and *going into full detail*, in these confessions.

There is one very erroneous impression which young persons receive from hearing *public* prayer. It is always, as it ought to be, *general* in its language, both of confession and request. Take for instance the following language of the

Secret prayer often too general.

Way to make prayer interesting.

prayer-book of the Protestant Episcopal Church, so admirably adapted to its purpose :

“ We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done ; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done ; and there is no health in us.”

How *general* is this language. It is so with our Savior’s model of prayer ! “ Forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who are indebted to us.” Public prayer ought to be somewhat general in its expressions, for it is the united voice often of thousands, and should express acknowledgments and petitions which are common to them all.

But the mistake that multitudes fall into, is, that when they begin to pray themselves, they take public prayer as the model for secret supplication ; and they spend their season of retirement in *repeating the same general supplications* which they hear from the pulpit in the hour of public worship. But this is a very great error. The very object of secret prayer is to afford the soul an opportunity of going minutely into its own particular and private case. There is no magic in solitude, no mysterious influence in the closet itself, to purify and sanctify the heart. It is the opportunity which the closet affords of *bringing forward the individual case in all its particularity and detail*, which gives to secret devotion its immense moral power. The general and comprehensive language which is adopted in public prayer, is thus adopted, because it is the object of public prayer to express only those wants, and to confess those sins which are common to all who join in it. The language must necessarily therefore be general. But it is always the intention of those who use it, that minute detail should be given in private supplications. In the prayer of the Episcopal Church,

Formal confession.

for example, the evening prayer for families is printed thus :

"We come before thee in an humble sense of our unworthiness, acknowledging our manifold transgressions of thy righteous laws.* But O, gracious Father, who desirest not the death of a sinner, look upon us, we beseech thee, in mercy, and forgive us all our transgressions."

* "Here let him who reads make a short pause, that every one may confess the sins and failings of that day."

Here you will observe that on the margin it is suggested that this entering into detail should be done even in the family worship. How much more when the individual has retired alone, for the very purpose of bringing forward the peculiar circumstances of his own case !

This is the only way to make secret prayer what it really ought to be, for without this the exercise is almost certain to degenerate to a lifeless form. A child, just before retiring to rest, attempts to pray. He uses substantially the expressions which he has heard in the pulpit : "I acknowledge that I am a great sinner. I have done this day many things which are wrong ; I have neglected many duties, and broken many of thy commands." Now how easy is it for a person to say all this with apparent fervor, and yet have present to his mind while saying it, no one act in which he really feels that he has done wrong, and consequently no distinct mental feeling that he is guilty ! Our confessions, half of the time, amount to nothing more than a general acknowledgement of the doctrine of human depravity. "I humbly confess that I have been a great sinner this day," says a Christian at his evening prayer, and while he says it, the real state of his mind is, "I suppose I must have been so. All men are sinners, and I know that of course I am." As to any distinct and defi-

nite feeling of *personal guilt*, it is often the farthest from the mind while using such language.

It is astonishing how easily and how soon we become habituated to the general language of confession, so as to use it most frequently without any sense of personal guilt. A parent will reprove a boy for a fault, and as the father goes over the details, the boy will defend and excuse himself at every step. *Here* he will lay off the blame upon his brother —*there* he will say that he did not know what else to do—and in another respect he will say that he tried to do as well as he could. And yet, after he has finished all this, he will add gravely, “But I do not pretend to excuse myself. I know I have done wrong.” I have had such cases occur continually in the management of the young.

But do not forget what is the subject of this chapter. It is the means of *correcting faults*; and, as the first means, I am describing full and particular confession of the sins which you wish to avoid in future. Before I go on, however, I wish to say one thing in regard to the effect of going into minute detail in prayer. It is the only way in which the duty of prayer can be made to awaken any strong degree of interest in the mind. When you come at night, with a mind wearied and exhausted with the labors of the day, to your hour of retirement, you will find your thoughts wandering in prayer. No complaint is more common than this. There is scarcely any question which is asked more frequently of a pastor than this: “How shall I avoid the sin of wandering thoughts in prayer?” It would be asked, too, much oftener than it is, were it not that Christians shrink from acknowledging to their religious teachers a fault which seems to imply their want of interest in spiritual things. Now the remedy in nine cases out of ten is, coming to particulars in your prayers. Have no long formal exordiums. Abandon the common phrases of general confession and request, and

come at once to the particular circumstances and minute wants and trials of the day. Describe not only particular faults, but all the minute attending circumstances. Feel that you are alone ; that the restraints of publicity are removed from you ; that you may safely abandon the phraseology and the form which a proper respect for the customs of men retains in the pulpit and at the family altar, and come and converse with your great Protector, as a man converses with his friend ; and remember that if you fasten upon one word which you have spoken with an improper spirit, and confess your guilt in that one sin, mentioning all the circumstances which gave it its true character, and exposing the wicked emotions which dictated it, you make more truly a *confession*, than you would do by repeating solemnly the best expression of the doctrine of human depravity that creed, or catechism, or system of theology ever gave.

But to return to the modes of correcting faults. If your fault is one which long habit has riveted very closely upon you, I would recommend that you confess it in writing ; it is more distinct, and what you put upon paper you impress very strongly upon your mind. Suppose when evening comes, in reflecting upon the events of the day, you remember an act of unkindness to a younger brother. Now, sit down and write a full description of it, and make it appear in its true light. Do not exaggerate it, nor extenuate it, but paint it in its true colors. Express your sorrow, if you feel any, and express just as much as you feel. Be honest. Use no cant phrase of acknowledgment, but just put upon paper your actual feelings in regard to the transaction. Now, after you have done this, you may, if you please, just fold up the paper and put it into the fire ; you can not put with it into the fire the vivid impression of your guilt, which this mode of confession will produce. Or you may, if you prefer it, preserve it for a time, that you may read it again, and renew the im-

The father's letter.

pressions which it made, before you destroy it. But it will be better to destroy it at last. It is not in human nature to write its thoughts in such a case, with the intention of preserving the record, without being secretly influenced by the probability that the description will sooner or later be seen by other eyes.

But I must pass to the second step in the progress of removing a fault. It is watchfulness. Suppose that the father, in the case which I have imagined, in order to illustrate this subject, should say to his son, or which would be better still, should write to him as follows :

“ My dear Son,—I received your account of the instances in which you have shown vanity. I am very glad that you are disposed to correct yourself of this fault, and will now tell you what you are to do next.

“ You would without doubt, if you had had time, have thought of many more instances, but you would not have thought of all ; a great many would have escaped your notice. You show vanity many times when *you do not know it yourself*. When we are habituated to doing any thing that is wrong, we become blinded by the habit ; so that the vainest people in the world scarcely know that they are vain at all. Now, the next step that you are to take is to regain moral sensibility on this subject, so as to know clearly what vanity is, and always to notice when you are guilty of it. The way to do this, is, for you to watch yourself. Notice your conduct for two days, and whenever you detect yourself displaying vanity on any occasion, go and make a memorandum of it. You need not write a full description of it, for you would frequently not have time ; but write enough to remind you of it, and then at the end of the two days send the list to me. In the mean time I will observe you, and if I

Object of this illustration.

Faults to be corrected.

see any instances of this fault I will remember them, and see if I recollect any which you have not marked down.

“It will not be very pleasant, my son, to watch yourself thus for faults, but it is the most effectual means of removing them. You may, however, do just as you please about adopting this plan. If you adopt it, send your catalogue to me; if you do not, you need not say any thing about it.

“Your affectionate parent, _____.”

Now I wish my young readers to understand, that though I have described fully this case, partly with a design to illustrate the spirit with which parents and teachers should engage in their efforts for the moral improvement of the young, yet my main design is to explain to the young themselves a course which they may take immediately to correct their faults. I am in hopes that many a one who reads this chapter will say to himself, “I have some faults which I should like to correct, and I will try this experiment.” I wish that you would try the experiment. You all know what your faults are. One can remember that he is very often undutiful or disrespectful to his parents. Another is aware that she is not always kind to her sister. Another is irritable—he often gets into a passion. Another is forward and talkative; her friends have often reproved her, but she has never made any systematic effort to reform. Another is indolent—often neglecting known duties and wasting time. Thus all young persons are the victims of some moral disease or other, from which, though they may be Christians, they are not fully freed. Now just try my prescription. Take the two steps which I have described; confess fully and minutely the particular fault which you wish first to correct—for it is best to attack one enemy at a time—and then—with careful watchfulness keep a record of your subsequent transgressions. You can not do this with a proper

Young and old persons.

spirit of dependence on God and accountability to him, without breaking the chains of any fault or habit which may now be domineering over you. The efficacy of such moral treatment in these moral diseases is far more certain and powerful than that of any cordial in restoring the fainting powers. I hope therefore that every young person who reads this chapter will not merely express a cool approbation of these plans, but will resolutely set to work in examining his character, and in trying these methods of altering or improving it.

“ Every young person ?—And why not those who are not young ?” says some one. “ Why can not the old correct their faults in this way ?” They can, but they will not. I recommend it exclusively to the young, not because it is less efficacious with others, but because others will not cordially try it. The difficulty which prevents middle-aged persons from going on as rapidly as the young in improvement of every kind, is, that they are not so easily induced to make the effort. It is a mistake to suppose that it is easier for a child to reform his character than for a man, if the same efforts were made. A child is told of his faults ; the rules of politeness governing in social life forbid us to mention them with the same freedom to a man. A child is encouraged and urged forward in efforts to improve ; the man is solitary in his resolutions and unaided in his efforts. A child is willing to do any thing. Confession is not so humiliating to him ; making a catalogue of his sins is not so shrunk from. If the man of fifty is willing to do what the boy of fifteen does, he may improve even faster than he. Some of the most remarkable cases of rapid alteration and improvement of character which I have ever known have been in the decline of age.

Let me say therefore respectfully to those who may chance

Correcting faults.

Temptations.

An irritable temper.

to read this book, but who are beyond the age for which it is specially intended, that we all have faults which we ought to discover and attempt to mend. They affect our happiness. They bring us down lower than we should otherwise stand in the estimation of others. Thus they impede our influence and usefulness. If we would now explore and correct these, taking some such thorough-going course as I have described, how rapidly we should at once rise in usefulness and happiness ! Instead of that, however, we listen to moral and religious instruction from the pulpit, to admire the form of its expression, or perhaps to fix the *general principles* in our hearts ; but the business of exploring thoroughly our own characters to ascertain their real condition, and of going earnestly to work upon all the detail of actual and minute repair—pulling down in this place, building up in that, and altering in the other—ah ! this is a business with which we have but little to do.

But I must go on with my account of the means of correcting faults, for I have one more expedient to describe. I have been digressing a little to urge you to apply practically what I say, to yourselves, and resolve to try the experiment. This one more expedient relates to your exposure to temptation. In regard to temptation you have I think two duties. First, to avoid all *great* temptations ; and secondly, to encounter the *small* ones with a determination, by God's blessing, to conquer them.

A boy knows, I will imagine, that he has an *irritable* spirit ; he wishes to cure himself of it. I will suppose that he has taken the two steps which I have already described, and now as the morning comes, and he is about to go forth to the exposures of the day, we may suppose him to hold : the following conversation with his father, or some other friend.

“ I have made a great many resolutions,” says the boy,

Conversation between the boy and his friend.

"and I am really desirous of not becoming angry and impatient to-day. But I always do, and I am afraid I always shall."

"Always?" asks his friend. "Do you get angry *every day*?"

"I do almost always; whenever any thing happens to vex me."

"What are the most common things that happen to vex you?"

"Why, I almost always get angry playing marbles. George does not play fair, and I get angry with him, and he gets angry with me."

"Do you always get angry playing marbles?"

"We do very often."

"Then I advise you to avoid playing marbles altogether. I know you like to play, but if you find it affords too great a temptation for you to resist, you must abandon it, or you will not cure yourself of your fault. What other temptations do you meet with?"

"Why I get put out with my sums at school."

"Get put out with your sums!—What do you mean by that?"

"I get impatient and vexed because I can not do them, and then I get angry with them."

"What, with the *sums*!"

"Yes; with the sums, and the book, and the slate, and every thing else; I know it is very foolish and wicked."

"Well; now I advise you to take your slate and pencil to-day, and find some difficult sum, such a one as you have often been angry with, and sit down calmly to work, and see if you can not go through it, and *fail of doing it*, and yet not feel vexed and angry. Think before you begin, how sad it is for you to be under the control of wicked passions, and ask God to help you, and then go on expecting to find

Great and small temptations.

difficulty, and endeavoring to meet it with a calm and patient spirit. If you succeed in this, you will really improve while you do it. By gaining one victory over yourself you will find another more easy.

“ Which do you think is the greatest temptation for you, to play marbles or to do sums ? ”

“ Why, I think that to play marbles is ; because the boys don’t play fair.”

“ Very well ; now I wish you to practice the easiest lesson first. Conquer yourself in your arithmetical temptation first, and then perhaps you can encounter the other. And I wish you would watch yourself to-day, and observe what are the trials which are too great for you to bear, and avoid them until you have acquired more moral strength. But do not flee from any temptation which you think you can resist. By meeting and resisting it, you will increase your power.”

Now this is the course to be pursued in the correction of all faults. The temptations which you think you will not be successful in resisting, you ought to *avoid*, no matter at what sacrifice ; and though you ought not to seek the trial of your strength, yet where Providence gives you the trial, go forward to the effort which it requires, with confidence in his help, and with resolution to do your duty. If you have the right spirit, he will help you ; and virtuous principle will grow by any exposure which does not overpower it.

I have however spoken more fully on this subject in the chapter of discipline and trial, where the general effect of such discipline as we have here to pass through was pointed out. I have here only alluded to it again to show how important an auxiliary it is in the correction of particular faults.

But I must pass to the consideration of another part of my subject, for the correction of absolute faults of character

Growing in grace.

Unavailing efforts.

The mother.

is by no means the only, or even the most important object of attention in Christian progress. The spirit of piety, which is the mainspring of all these efforts in the improvement of the character, is to be directly cultivated. The command "grow in grace," seems to refer to this progress *in the spirit of piety itself*. The correction of external faults, and the improvement of the character in all those aspects in which intercourse between man and man is concerned, will result from it. But it is itself something different from these external changes. To grow in grace, is to have the *heart itself* so changed that sin shall become more and more hateful, the promotion of the general happiness an increasing object of interest and desire, and the soul more and more closely united to God, so as to receive all its happiness from him.

This now is a change in the affections of the heart. Improvement of conduct will result from it, but it is in itself essentially different from right conduct. It is the *fountain*, from which good actions are the streams. I wish, therefore, that every one of my readers would now turn his attention to this subject, and inquire with me, by what means he may grow most rapidly in attachment to the Savior, and in hatred of sin. A very unwise and ineffectual kind of effort is very often made, which I shall first describe; and then I shall proceed to describe the means which may be successful, in drawing the heart closer and closer to Jehovah.

To illustrate the unavailing efforts which are sometimes made to awaken in the heart a deeper and deeper interest in piety, I will suppose a case, and it is a case which is exceedingly common. A professing Christian—and, to make the case more definite, I will suppose the individual to be the mother of a family—feels that she does not love God as she ought, and she is consequently unhappy. She is aware that her affections are placed too strongly, perhaps, upon her family

The man of business.

—her children. She knows that she is a wanderer from her Savior, and feels at all times, when she thinks of religious duty, a settled uneasiness which mars many of her enjoyments, and often saddens her heart. Now, what does she do to remedy this difficulty? Why, when the week is past, and her hour of prayer on the Sabbath has arrived, she thinks a little of her cold and wayward condition, and tries, by *direct efforts*, to arouse in her heart feelings of penitence and love. But she tries in vain. I acknowledge that she is very guilty in being in such a state, but if she is so, her *direct efforts to feel* will be vain. She will have, for an hour, a weary and melancholy struggle—the Sabbath will pass away, rendered gloomy by her condition and her reflections—and Monday morning will come, with its worldly cares and enjoyments, to drift her still farther from God and from happiness.

A man of business, engrossed in the management of his prosperous affairs, knows that he is not living and acting as a servant of God. And yet he is a member of a Christian church;—he has solemnly consecrated himself to the Savior; and when he thinks of it, he really wishes that his heart was in a different state. The world however holds him from day to day, and the only thing which he does to save himself from wandering to a returnless distance from God, is to *strive a little*, morning and evening, at his short period of secret devotion, to *feel his sins*. He *makes direct effort* to urge his heart to gratitude. He perhaps kneels before the throne of God, and knowing how little love for God he really feels, he exerts every nerve to bring his heart to exercise more. He is trying to control his affections by direct effort—and he probably fails. He is striving in vain. He soon becomes discouraged, and yields himself again to the current which is bearing him away from holiness and peace.

The dejected Christian.

I once knew a young man—and while I describe his case it is possible that there may be many of the readers of this chapter who will say his case is like theirs—who had a faint hope that he was a Christian ; but his penitence was in his opinion so feeble and heartless, his love to God was so cold, and his spark of grace, if there was any in his heart, was so faint and languishing, that he scarcely dared to hope. He did not therefore take the stand, or perform the duties of a Christian. He thought that he must make more progress himself in piety before he endeavored to do any thing for others ; he was accordingly attempting to make this progress. He struggled with his own heart to awaken a stronger love and deeper penitence there ; but it was a sad and almost fruitless struggle. He became dejected and desponding ; he thought that his heart was still hardened and cold in sin ; he strove against this, but he found that religious feeling would not come at his bidding. He continued thus for a long time, unhappy himself and useless to others.

The principle which I have been designing to illustrate by these cases is, that the best way to improve or alter the affections of the heart, is *not* by *direct efforts* upon the heart itself. The degree of power which man has directly over the affections of the heart is very limited. A mere theorist will say that he must have *entire control* over them, or they can not be blameworthy or praiseworthy. But no one but the mere theorist will say this. A benevolent man, during an inclement season, sends fuel to a destitute and suffering family, and perhaps goes himself to visit and to cheer the sick one there. Does not he take a great pleasure in thus relieving misery, and is not this benevolent feeling praiseworthy ? And yet it is not under his direct control ; he can not possibly help taking pleasure in relieving suffering. Suppose I were to say to him, “Sir, just to try a philosophical experiment, will you now alter your heart, so

as to be glad to know that people are suffering. I will tell you the facts about a child which perished with the cold ; and while I do it, will you so alter your heart (which must be entirely under your control, or else its emotions can not be praiseworthy or blameworthy) as to delight in that cruel suffering ?" How absurd would this be ! The man *must* be pained to hear of sufferings which he can not help, and yet sympathy with the sorrows of others is praiseworthy.

Again, sister and sister have become alienated from each other. The feeling which was at first coldness has become dislike. And, unnatural as it is that they whom God has placed so near together, should remain sundered in heart, they have become fixed and settled in that condition. Suppose the parent were to say to them, " I know you *can* love each other, and you ought to love each other, and I command you immediately to do it." They may fear parental displeasure, they may know that they should be happier if they were united in heart ; but will affection come at once at their call ?

The entire free agency of man, by which is meant his freedom from all external restraint in his conduct, can not be asserted too frequently, or kept too distinctly in the view of every human being. There is however a possibility of presenting this subject in such a light as to lead the mind to the erroneous idea that all the affections of the heart are in the same sense under the control of the will as the motions of the body are. I do not mean that any respectable writer or preacher will advocate such a view, but only that in expressing his belief in human freedom, in sweeping and unqualified terms, he may unintentionally convey the impression. There is unquestionably a very essential difference between a man's freedom of *feeling* and his freedom of *acting*. A man may be induced to *act* by a great variety of means : a motive of

Freedom of feeling and freedom of action.

any kind, if strong enough, determines the will. Suppose, for instance, a sea-captain wishes to induce a man to leap off from the deck of his ship into the sea ; he may attempt in a great many ways to obtain his object. He may command him to do it, and threaten punishment if he disobeys ; he may hire him to do it ; he may show the sailor that his little son has fallen overboard, and thus induce the parent to risk his life that he may save that of his child. He may thus in various ways appeal to very different feelings of the human heart—love of money, fear, or parental affection—and if by any of these, the *volition*, as metaphysicians term it, that is, the *determination*, can be formed, the man goes overboard in a moment. He can do any thing which, *from any motive whatever*, he resolves to do.

In regard however to the *feelings of the heart*, it is far different. Though man is equally a free agent in regard to these, it is in quite a different way ; that is, the feelings of the heart are not to be managed and controlled by *simple determination*, as this external conduct may be. Suppose, for instance, the captain wished that the sailor should be grateful for some favor which he had received, and of which he had been entirely regardless ; and suppose that he should *command* him to be grateful, and threaten him with some punishment if he should refuse ; or suppose he should endeavor to *hire* him to be grateful, or should try to persuade him to be thankful for past favors in order to obtain more. It would be absurd. Gratitude, like any other feeling of the heart, though it is of a moral nature, and though man is perfectly free in exercising it, will not always come whenever the man determines to bring it. The external conduct is thus controlled by the determination of the mind, on whatever motives those determinations may be founded ; but the feelings and affections of the heart are under no such direct control

There is certainly, for all practical purposes, a great distinction between the heart and the conduct—between the *moral condition* of the soul and those *specific acts* which arise from it. Two children, a dutiful and a disobedient one, are walking together in a beautiful garden, and suddenly the gardener informs them that their father did not wish them to walk in a certain part of the ground, which they were just then entering. Now, how different will be the effect which this annunciation will make upon them! The one will immediately obey, leaving with alacrity the place which his father did not wish him to pass. The other will linger and make excuses, or perhaps altogether disobey. Just before they received the communication they were perhaps not thinking of their father at all; but though their minds were acting on other subjects, they possessed distinct and opposite characters as sons, characters which rendered it probable that one would comply with his father's wishes as soon as those wishes should be known, and that the other would not. So in all other cases; a dishonest man is dishonest in *character* when he is not actually stealing, and an humble and devoted Christian will have his heart in a right state even when he is entirely engrossed in some intellectual pursuit, or involved in the perplexities of business.

I am aware that, among metaphysical philosophers, there is a controversy on the question whether all that is of a moral nature, that is, all that is blameworthy or praiseworthy in human character, may not be shown to consist of *specific, voluntary acts*, of the moral being. Into this question I do not intend to enter here;—for if what is commonly called *character*, in contradistinction from *conduct*, may be resolved into voluntary acts, it is certainly to be done only by a nice metaphysical analysis, which common Christians can not be expected to follow.

To illustrate the nature of this subject, that is, the dis-

Story of the duke of Gloucester.

tinction, *for all practical purposes*, between character and conduct, I select the following narrative, which I take from Hume, with some alterations of form to make it more intelligible in this connection.

In early periods of the English history, Richard, duke of Gloucester, an intriguing and ambitious man, formed the design of usurping the throne. The former king had left several children, who were the proper heirs to the crown. They were however young, and Richard gained possession of the government, ostensibly that he might manage it until these children should become of age, when he was to surrender it to them again—but really with the design of putting them and all their influential friends to death, and thus making himself king.

One of the most powerful and faithful friends of the young princes was Lord Hastings, and the following is the account which Hume gives of the manner in which he was murdered by Richard.

“ The duke of Gloucester knowing the importance of gaining Lord Hastings, sounded at a distance his sentiments by means of a lawyer who lived in great intimacy with that nobleman ; but found him impregnable in his allegiance and fidelity to the children of Edward, who had ever honored him with his friendship. He saw, therefore, that there were no longer any measures to be kept with him ; and he determined to ruin utterly the man whom he despised of engaging to concur in his usurpation. Accordingly, at a certain day, he summoned a council in the Tower, whither Lord Hastings, suspecting no design against him, repaired without hesitation. The duke of Gloucester was capable of committing the most bloody and treacherous murders with the utmost coolness and indifference. On taking his place at the council table, he appeared in the easiest and most jovial humor

Richard's artful plan.

imaginable ; he seemed to indulge himself in familiar conversation with the counselors before they should enter on business ; and having paid some compliments to one of them, on the good and early strawberries which he raised in his garden, he begged the favor of having a dish of them. A servant was immediately dispatched to bring them to him. Richard then left the council, as if called away by some other business : but soon after returning, with an angry and inflamed countenance he asked them, ' What punishment do those deserve that have plotted against my life, who am so nearly related to the king, and am intrusted with the administration of government ? ' Hastings replied that they merited the punishment of traitors. ' These traitors,' then cried the protector, ' are the sorceress, my brother's wife, and Jane Shore, his companion, with others their associates : see to what a condition they have reduced me by



KING RICHARD

Violent measures.

their incantations and witchcraft.' As he said this, he laid bare his arm, all shriveled and decayed ; but the counselors, who knew that this infirmity had attended him from his birth, looked on each other with amazement ; Lord Hastings began to be alarmed :

" ' Certainly, my lord,' said he, ' if they be guilty of these crimes they deserve the severest punishment.'

" ' And do you reply to me,' exclaimed Richard, ' with your *ifs* and your *ands* ? You are the chief abettor of that witch Shore ! You are yourself a traitor : and by St. Paul I will not dine before your head be brought me.'

" He struck the table with his hand : armed men rushed in at the signal : the counselors were thrown into the utmost consternation ; and one of the guards, as if by accident or a mistake, aimed a blow with a poll-axe at one of the lords, named Stanley, who, aware of the danger, slunk under the table ; and though he saved his life, received a severe wound in the head in Richard's presence. Hastings was seized, was hurried away, and instantly beheaded on a timber log which lay in the court of the Tower. Two hours after, a proclamation, so well penned and fairly written that it must have been prepared before, was read to the citizens of London, enumerating his offenses, and apologizing to them for the sudden execution of that nobleman, who was very popular among them.'

After this act of violence Richard went forward with his plans until he attained complete, ultimate success. He caused the unhappy young princes whose claims were between him and the throne, to be confined in the Tower, a famous castle and prison on the banks of the Thames, in the lower part of London. He then sent orders to the constable of the Tower to put his innocent and helpless victims to death. The officer declined performing so infamous an act

He then ordered the constable to give up, for one night, the command of the Tower to another man. He did so, and the duke sent Sir James Tyrrel, who promised to see that his cruel orders were executed. But even Tyrrel was not savage enough to execute the children with his own hand ; he had not the hardihood even to look on while it was done. He accordingly employed three ruffians, whose names were Slater, Lighton, and Forrest, who came in the night-time to the door of the chamber in the Tower where the poor boys were confined. The murderers found them sleeping quietly in their bed. They killed them by suffocating them with the bolster and pillows, and then showed the dead bodies to Tyrrel, that he might assure Richard that they were no more. The ambitious and cruel duke became, by these means, Richard III. king of England.

Now, in reviewing this story, and a hundred others might easily have been found which would have answered the purposes of this illustration just as well, we see that the guilt which it discloses may be easily analyzed into three distinct portions. I mean they are distinct for all popular and practical purposes. A nice metaphysical investigation may or may not, I shall not consider which, reduce them again to the same.

1. *The external acts.* I mean the rushing in of armed men at the table—the wounding of Lord Stanley—the beheading of Lord Hastings—the reading of the false proclamation—and the murder of the children in their bed. These deeds were not performed by Richard himself ; he hired others to perpetrate these crimes, and he had not himself directly any thing to do with them. It may be difficult to find, in the whole story, any one *external act*, which Richard did, which was wrong.

2. *The internal acts or determinations of mind.* That

Richard's wicked character.

is, the *plans* which Richard formed, and the wicked *resolutions* which he came to. He must, for example, at one time have hesitated whether he should have Hastings murdered or not. He weighed the difficulties and dangers on the one side, and the advantages to his cause on the other, and at last he resolved to do it. This was a *mental act*. In the same manner the determination to have the princes murdered was an *act* of his mind. It was savage and abominable in the extreme, but what I wish the reader particularly to notice in it is, that it was a *voluntary act*. He deliberated about it, and then he *voluntarily resolved* upon it. His whole conduct throughout this business is a series of most wicked mental acts, which he deliberately performed, and for which he was guilty, though he contrived to put off the *external* deeds of violence to the hands of others.

3. *The ambitious and cruel heart which instigated these acts.* Washington would not have done such things. King Alfred would not have done them. No. Richard had, by a distinction which, for all the practical purposes of life, will always be made, a savage and an unprincipled *character*, without which he would not have done such things. Another man, when hesitating whether to murder two innocent boys, in order to prepare a way for himself to a throne, would have found principles of compassion and of justice coming up, he knows not how or whither, but still coming up to arrest his hand. Richard had no such obstacles as these to contend with. He was ambitious, and sanguinary, and unrelenting in *character* as well as in *conduct*. Before he performed any of these mental acts, that is, came to the wicked determinations named under the second head, he had a heart which fitted him exactly for them.

It is evident too,—and this is a point of the greatest importance,—that this cruel and ambitious disposition, which was the origin of all his wicked plans, was not voluntary in

Sense in which character is voluntary.

the same sense in which the plans themselves were so. In regard to his positive determination to have the children murdered, for example, he deliberated, and then voluntarily decided upon it. But who supposes that he ever deliberated, while he was carrying forward his schemes, whether he would be a cruel or a merciful man, and decided upon the former ? When he awoke each morning, he undoubtedly thought about the coming day, and formed his designs. He said to himself, "I will do this, or I will stop that. I will have this man killed to-day, or I will banish that man." But who imagines that, every morning, he considered and decided whether he should be virtuous or vicious that day in heart ? Who can suppose that he formed such resolutions as these : "I will be a cruel man to-day ; I will have no principle and no compassion for others, but will delight only in my own ambition ?" No. He was cruel, and ambitious, and sanguinary, without *determining* to be so ; for the question, what general character he should cherish, probably never came up. All that he deliberated and decided upon unquestionably was, by what *specific plans* he should gratify the impulses of his wicked heart. He determined upon these *plans*, but he did not determine upon the *impulses*. He would sometimes resolve to compass the destruction of an enemy, or to take certain steps which should lead him to the throne ; but he never said to himself, "Now I will awaken in myself an impulse of cruelty ; now I will call up into my heart ungovernable ambition and love of power." No. These feelings reigned in his heart from day to day, without any direct effort on his part to keep them there. How they came, and why they remained, is not my present purpose to inquire. All I mean here to insist upon is, that they were not, like the plans of iniquity which he formed, the result of direct choice and determination ; and consequently they were

not voluntary, *in the same sense* in which these plans themselves were the result of direct volition.

It may be said that this wicked state of heart was the result of previous bad conduct, which had formed a habit of sin ; and perhaps it was. I am not attempting to account for it, but only to bring it to view. I am simply endeavoring to show that there is, independently of the conduct, whether external or internal acts are meant by that term, a *state of heart* from which that conduct flows.

Such considerations as these, and many others which might be introduced if necessary, plainly show that man's *moral* feelings are far less under his direct control than his *intellectual* or his *bodily* powers. He may try to lift a weight—he may try to run, to think, or to understand—and he will probably succeed ; but it is hard to *love* or to *hate* by merely trying to do so. But after stating thus, and illustrating this principle, there is one sentence which I ought to write in capitals, and express with the strongest emphasis in my power. *The heart is not independent of our control in such a sense as to free us from moral obligation and accountability.* We are most unquestionably *free* in the exercise of every good and of every evil feeling of the heart, and we are plainly accountable for them most fully, though we may not have exerted a direct determination or volition to bring them into being.

But is there any practical advantage, it may be asked, in drawing this distinction between the heart and the conduct ? There is a great practical advantage, otherwise I should by no means have taken so much pains to exhibit it ; for although the intellectual effort which is necessary on the part of the reader in going into such a discussion is of great advantage, I should not have entered upon it with that object alone. I design to introduce nothing into this book but what will be of practical utility.

Importance of it.

It is then practically important that we should all understand, not only that our conduct—by which I mean our *acts*, whether internal or external—is wrong ; but also that we have within us *an evil heart*, inclining us to go astray ; and that this evil heart itself is distinct from the going-astray which results from it. A clear conception of this is the only safeguard against that self-sufficiency which is destructive of all religious progress. “The heart,” says the Scriptures “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked !” The power which created it, alone can change its tendencies, so as to make it as easy and as natural for us to do right as it is now to do wrong. To this power we must look. We must look to God, too, with a feeling of distrust of ourselves, and a conviction that help can come only from him. “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” Yes, free as man is, and fully and entirely accountable as he is, for all his conduct, there is a sense in which he is a miserable *slave to sin*, in wretched bondage to a tyrant, from whose chains no struggles of his own will ever set him free. When he realizes this, and feels humbled and powerless, and utterly dependent upon divine grace, then God is ready to come into his soul to purify and save him.

In thus discussing this subject here, it has not been my intention to go metaphysically into the subject of the nature of moral agency. My design has only been to show to Christians, that the feelings of penitence for sin and ardent love to the Savior, are not feelings which they are to bring to their hearts by struggling directly to introduce them. You can not be penitent by simply trying to be penitent. You can not hate sin or love God more sincerely than you do, by simply trying to feel thus. The heart is to be molded and guided in other ways.

Some of these ways by which the heart is to be led more and more to God, I shall describe.

1. By acquiring true knowledge. If you are a Christian at all, your piety will be increased and strengthened by bringing often before your mind those truths which show the necessity and the moral beauty of piety. Instead of struggling *directly* to bring penitence to your heart by an effort of the will, spend a part of your little season of retirement in reflecting on the consequences of sin. Look around you and see how many families it has made miserable, how many hearths it has desolated ! Think of the power it has had in ruining the world in which we live, and how dreadful would be its ravages, if God should permit it to have its way among all his creatures. Reflect how it has destroyed your own peace of mind, injured your usefulness, brought a stain upon the Christian name. Reflect upon such subjects as these, so as to increase the vividness of your *knowledge*—and though you make no effort to feel penitence, even if you do not think of penitence at all, it will rise in your heart if there is any grace there. You can not look upon the consequences of sin without repenting that you have ever assisted to procure them. Peter did not repent of his treachery by *trying* to feel sorry. The Lord turned and looked upon Peter ; that look brought with it recollections. He saw clearly his relation to his Savior, and the ingratitude of his denial.

It is so with all other emotions of piety. You will not succeed in loving God supremely by simply making the effort to do so. Look at his goodness and mercy to you ; see it in the thousand forms in which it shines upon you. Do not dwell upon it in generals, but come to minute particulars ; and whether old or young, and whatever may be the circumstances of your lives, reflect carefully upon God's kind dealings with you. Are you a mother ?—as you hold your infant upon your knee, or observe its playful brothers and sisters in health and happiness around you, consider a moment by whose goodness they were **given to** you, and by whose mercy

The child.

Gratitude.

they are daily spared. Are you a child?—look upon the comforts, and privileges, and sources of happiness which God has given you—and while you view them, remember that every week there are multitudes of children around you suffering from cold, from hunger, from neglect, or who are summoned to an early grave. I have stood at the bedside of a child who was, a fortnight before, in her class at the Sabbath School—and seen her sink from day to day under the grasp of sickness and pain, until her reason failed, and her strength was gone, and at last she slumbered in death. A few days afterward she was deposited, in the depth of winter, in her cold grave. Blustering storms and wintry tempests do not indeed disturb the repose of the tomb, but when you are sitting in health and happiness at your own cheerful fireside, and hear the howling winds which sweep around you—or in a more genial season feel the warm breath of spring upon your healthful cheek—can you think of the thousand cases like the one I have alluded to, and not feel grateful to your kind Protector? If your heart is not entirely unrenewed, these affections will be warmly awakened while you reflect upon God's goodness, and thus learn how much you are indebted to him.

It is thus with other feelings; they are to come to the

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THE COLD GRAVE.

Christian action.Why Howard became interested for prisoners.

heart, not by the direct effort to bring them there, but by bringing to view the truths which are calculated to awaken them. If your heart is right toward God in any degree, the presentation of these truths will awaken penitence and love; and the more knowledge you acquire in regard to your relations to your Maker and his dealings with you, the more rapid will be your growth in grace.

2. The second means of growing in grace is *Christian action*. Faith will not only show itself by works, but works will increase faith. Let a man make an effort to relieve a sufferer, and he becomes more and more interested for him. He first sends him a little food, or a little fuel, when he is sick, and he finds that this does good; it relieves the pressure, and brings cheering and encouragement to the family, before just ready to despair. The benefactor, then, becoming more interested in the case, sends a physician; and when the patient is cured, he procures business for him; and thus goes on from step to step, until perhaps at last he feels a greater interest in that one case than in all the suffering poor of the town beside. It all began by the simple act of sending a little wood, which was perhaps almost accidental, or was at least prompted by a very slight benevolent feeling. This feeling has, however, increased to a strong and steady principle; and to what is its increase owing?—simply to his *benevolent effort*.

I have already once or twice alluded to the benevolent Howard, who went through Europe, visiting the prisons, that he might learn the condition of their unhappy tenants and relieve their sufferings. And how was it that he became so much interested in prisoners? It devolved upon him, in the discharge of some public duty in his own county in England, to do something for the relief of prisoners there—and the moment that he began to *do something* for the prisoners, that moment he began to love them;—and the

more he did for them, the more strongly he was attached to their cause.

The Apostle Paul is one of the most striking examples of the power of Christian effort to promote Christian love. He gave himself wholly to his work, and the consequence was, he became completely identified with it. He loved it better than he did life, and the strongest expressions of attachment to the Savior that the Bible contains, are to be found in the language which he used when he was drawing toward the close of his labors upon earth.

If we then would grow in attachment to our Savior, we must *do something* for him. But notice—it is not the mere *external act* which will promote your growth in piety; the act must be performed, in some degree at least, from Christian principle. You can all put this method immediately to the test. Think of something which you can *do*, by which you will be co-operating with God. The design of God is to relieve suffering and promote happiness wherever there is opportunity; and as sin is the greatest obstacle in the way, he directs his first and chief efforts to the removal of sin. Now endeavor to find something which you can *do*, by which sin can be removed or suffering alleviated, and go forth to the work feeling that you are co-operating with your Savior in his great and benevolent plans. Perhaps you will find an opportunity in your own family—or perhaps in your neighborhood; but wherever it is, if you go forth to the duty under the influence of attachment to the Savior and love to men, these feelings will certainly be increased by the effort. You will feel, while you do it, that you are a co-worker with God—that you are as it were making common cause with him, and the bonds by which you were before only loosely bound to him are strengthened.

Go forward then efficiently in doing good; set your hearts

An evil heart.

upon it. If you feel that you have but little love to God, bring that little *into exercise*, and it will grow.

3. The last of the means of growing in grace which I shall now mention, is an humble sense of dependence on the influences of the Holy Spirit, and sincere prayer for those influences. I freely acknowledge the difficulty which this subject presents. If we attempt to form any theory by which we can clearly comprehend how accountability can rest upon a soul which is still dependent upon a higher power for all that is good, we shall only plunge ourselves into endless perplexity. We know that we are accountable for all our feelings, as well as for our words and deeds, and at the same time we know that those feelings within us which reason and conscience condemn, will come, unless the Holy Spirit saves us from being their prey. How emphatically does the language of Paul describe this our melancholy subjection to this law of sin !

“ For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing : for to will is present with me ; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not : but the evil which I wculd not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ”

The conclusion to which he comes in the next verse is the right one, that God will deliver us through Jesus Christ our Lord. We must feel, then, humbly dependent on an influence from above. Let us come daily to our Father in heaven, praying him to draw us to the Savior ; we shall not

Divine influence necessary.

come unless he draw us. Let us feel dependent every day for a fresh supply of divine grace to keep these hearts in a proper frame. It is not enough to express this feeling in our morning prayer; we must carry it with us into all the circumstances of the day. When we are going into temptation we must say, "Lord, hold thou me up and then I shall be safe," and we must say it with a feeling of entire moral dependence on God.

Nor need we fear that this sense of dependence on God will impair our sense of personal guilt, when we willfully sin against him. I do not attempt to present any theory by which the two may be shown to be compatible with each other. We can not easily understand the theory, but we all know that we are guilty for living in sin; and we feel and know that our hearts do not change simply by our determining that they shall. Since then the two truths are clear, let us cordially admit them both. Let us in the spirit of humility, and entire trust in God's word, believe our Maker when he says, that he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Let us believe this cordially, however difficult it may be to understand what can, in such a case, be the guilt of the hardened one:—and applying the declaration to our own case, let us come before him praying that he will turn our hearts to holiness; and at the same time let us see and feel our guilt in neglecting duty and disobeying God as we do.

This feeling of entire dependence on the Holy Spirit for moral progress is the safest and happiest feeling which the Christian can cherish. Such weakness and helplessness, as ours loves protection, and if we can fully make up our minds that there is a difficulty in this subject beyond our present powers to surmount, we can feel fully our own moral responsibility, and at the same time know that our dearest moral interests are in God's care. This feeling is

Intellectual improvement.

A finished education.

committing our souls to our Savior's keeping. Were our hearts entirely under our own direct control, independent of God, we, and we only, could be their keepers; but if we have given our hearts to him, God has promised to keep us by *his power*. He is able to keep us. He has control, after all, in our hearts; and if we are willing to put our trust in him, he *will* keep us from falling, and present us at last faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.

II. INTELLECTUAL IMPROVEMENT.

It may perhaps seem strange that I should discuss the subject of intellectual progress in a book devoted to an explanation and enforcement of the principles of piety. I should not do this were I not firmly persuaded that a regular and uninterrupted intellectual progress is a duty which is peculiarly binding upon the Christian. Let the reader reflect a moment, that those intellectual powers which God has given him are intended to exist forever, and that if he shall be prepared at death to enter the world of happiness, they will go on expanding forever, adding not only to his means, but to his capacities of enjoyment.

The great mass of mankind consider the intellectual powers as susceptible of a certain degree of development in childhood, to prepare the individual for the active duties of life. This degree of progress they suppose to be made before the age of twenty is attained, and hence they talk of an education being finished! Now, if a parent wishes to convey the idea that his daughter has closed her studies at school, or that his son has finished his preparatory professional course, and is ready to commence practice, there is perhaps no strong objection to his using of the common phrase, that the education is finished; but in any general or proper use of language, there is no such thing as a finished education. The most successful student that ever left a

Object of education.

1. To strengthen the powers.

school, or took his degree at college, never arrived at a good place to stop in his intellectual course. In fact, the farther he goes the more desirous will he feel to go on ; and if you wish to find an instance of the greatest eagerness and interest with which the pursuit of knowledge is prosecuted, you will find it undoubtedly in the case of the most accomplished and thorough scholar that the country can furnish, one who has spent a long life in study, and who finds that the farther he goes the more and more widely does the boundless field of intelligence open before him.

Give up then, at once, all idea of finishing your education. The sole object of the course of discipline at any literary institution in our land is not to finish, but just to show you how to begin :—to give you an impulse and a direction upon that course which you ought to pursue with unabated and uninterrupted ardor as long as you have being.

It is unquestionably true, that every person, whatever are his circumstances or condition in life, ought at all times to be making some steady efforts to enlarge his stock of knowledge, to increase his mental powers, and thus to expand the field of his intellectual vision. I suppose most of my readers are convinced of this, and are desirous, if the way can only be distinctly pointed out, of making such efforts. In fact, no inquiry is more frequently made by intelligent young persons than this :—“ What course of reading shall I pursue ? What books shall I select, and what plan in reading them shall I adopt ? ” These inquiries I now propose to answer.

The objects of study are of several kinds ; some of the most important I shall enumerate.

1. *To increase our intellectual powers.* Every one knows that there is a difference of ability in different minds, but it is not so distinctly understood that every one’s abilities may be increased or strengthened by a kind of culture adapted expressly to this purpose ;—I mean a culture which is intended

Robinson Crusoe and Friday.

not to add to the stock of knowledge, but only to increase intellectual power. Suppose, for example, that when Robinson Crusoe on his desolate island had first found Friday the savage, he had said to himself as follows :

“ This man looks wild and barbarous enough ; he is to remain with me and help me in my various plans, but he could help me much more effectually if he were more of an intellectual being and less of a mere animal. Now I can increase his intellectual power by culture, and I will. But what shall I teach him ? ”

On reflecting a little farther on the subject, he would say to himself as follows :

“ I must not always teach him things necessary for him to know in order to assist me in my work, but I must try to teach him *to think* for himself. Then he will be far more valuable as a servant, than if he has to depend upon me for every thing that he does.”

Accordingly some evening when the two, master and man, have finished the labors of the day, Robinson is walking upon the sandy beach, with the wild savage by his side, and he concludes to give him his first lesson in mathematics. He picks up a slender and pointed shell, and with it draws carefully a circle upon the sand.

“ What is that ? ” says Friday.

“ It is what we call a circle,” says Robinson. “ I wish you now to come and stand here, and attentively consider what I am going to tell you about.”

Now Friday has, we will suppose, never given his serious attention to any thing, or rather he has never made a serious mental effort upon any subject for five minutes at a time in his life. The simplest mathematical principle is a complete labyrinth of perplexity to him. He comes up and looks at the smooth and beautiful curve which his master has drawn in the sand with a gaze of stupid amazement.

Robinson Crusoe's supposed experiment with Friday.

"Now listen carefully to what I say," says Robinson, "and see if you can understand it. Do you see this little point that I make in the middle of the circle?"

Friday says he does, and wonders what is to come from the magic character which he sees before him.*

"This," continues Robinson, "is a circle, and that point is the center. Now, if I draw lines from the center in any direction to the outside, these lines will all be equal."

So saying, he draws several lines. He sets Friday to measuring them. Friday sees that they are equal, and is pleased, from two distinct causes; one, that he has successfully exercised his thinking powers, and the other, that he has learned something which he never knew before.

Observe now that Robinson does not take this course with Friday because he wishes him to understand the nature of the circle. Suppose we were to say to him, "Why did you choose such a lesson as that for your savage? You can teach him much more useful things than the properties of the circle. What good will it do him to know how to make circles? Do you expect him to draw geometrical diagrams for you, or to calculate and project eclipses?"

"No," Robinson would reply; "I do not care to make Friday understand the properties of the circle. But I would have him to be a *thinking being*, and if I can induce him to think half an hour steadily and carefully, it is of no consequence upon what particular subject his thoughts are employed. I chose the circle because that seemed easy and distinct—suitable for the first lesson. I do not know that he will ever have occasion to make use of the fact that the radii of a circle are equal, as long as he shall live—but he will have occasion for the *power of patient attention and thought* which he acquired while attempting to understand that subject."

* See Vignette upon the title-page.

This would unquestionably be sound philosophy, and a savage who should study such a lesson on the beach of his own wild island, would forever after be less of a savage than before. The effect upon his mental powers, of one single effort like that, would last ; and a series of such efforts would transform him from a fierce and ungovernable, but stupid animal, to a cultivated and intellectual man.

Thus it is with all education. One great object is to *increase the powers of the mind*, and this is entirely distinct from the *acquisition of knowledge*. Scholars very often ask, when pursuing some difficult study, “What good will it do me to know this?” But that is not the question. They ought to ask, “What good will it do me to *learn* it? What effect upon my habits of thinking, and upon my intellectual powers, will be produced by the efforts to examine and to conquer these difficulties?”

A very fine example of this is the study of conic sections, a difficult branch of the course of mathematics pursued in college ; a study which, from its difficulty and its apparent uselessness, is often very unpopular in the class pursuing it. The question is very often asked, “What good will it ever do us in after-life to understand all these mysteries of the parabola, and the hyperbola, and the ordinates, and abscissas, and asymptotes?” The answer is, that the *knowledge of the facts*, which you acquire, will probably do you no good whatever. That is not the object, and every college officer knows full well that the mathematical principles which this science demonstrates, are not brought into use in after-life by one scholar in ten. But every college officer, and every intelligent student who will watch the operations of his own mind and the influences which such exercises exert upon it, knows equally well that the study of the higher mathematics produces an effect in *enlarging and disciplining the intellectual powers*, which the whole of life will not obliterate.

Acquisition of knowledge.

Do not shrink then from difficult work in your efforts at intellectual improvement. You ought, if you wish to secure the greatest advantage, to have some difficult work, that you may acquire habits of patient research, and increase and strengthen your intellectual powers.

2. *The acquisition of knowledge.* This is another object of intellectual effort ; and a moment's reflection will convince any one, that the acquisition of knowledge is the duty of all. Sometimes it has been said by an individual under the influence of a misguided interest in religious truth, that he will have nothing to do with human learning ; he will study nothing but the Bible, and his leisure hours he will give to meditation and prayer—and thus he will devote his whole time and strength to the promotion of his progress in piety. But if there is any thing clearly manifest of God's intentions in regard to employment for man, it is that he should spend a very considerable portion of his time on earth in *acquiring knowledge*—knowledge, in all the extent and variety in which it is offered to human powers. The whole economy of nature is such as to allure man to the investigation of it, and the whole structure of his mind is so framed as to qualify him exactly for the work. If now a person begins in early life, and even as late as twenty, and makes it a part of his constant aim to acquire knowledge —endeavoring every day to learn something which he did not know before, or to fix something in the mind which was before not familiar, he will make an almost insensible, but very rapid and important progress. The field of his intellectual vision will widen and extend every year. His powers of mind as well as his attainments will be increased ; and as he can see more extensively, so he can act more effectually every month than he could in the preceding. He thus goes on through life, growing in knowledge and in intellectual and moral power ; and if his spiritual progress keeps pace,

as it ought, with his intellectual advancement, he is, with the divine assistance and blessing, exalting himself higher in the scale of being, and preparing himself for a loftier and wider field of service in the world to come.

3. *The acquisition of skill* is a third object of intellectual effort. I point out clearly and separately the distinct objects which intellectual effort ought to have in view, that my readers may ascertain whether they are doing something to accomplish them all, and also in order that in all the particular plans which they may adopt, they may have constantly in mind the purpose which is in view in each, so as the more effectually to secure it. I wish, therefore, that my readers would notice particularly this third head, for it is one which, though in some respects quite as important as either of the others, is not often very clearly pointed out.

To recur to my illustration of Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday. The conversation which I supposed to be held with him on the subject of the circle, was not merely designed to *give him information* or *skill*, but to discipline and improve his intellectual powers by the exercise. Let us suppose now that the next day Robinson had concluded to narrate to Friday the story of his own past adventures, and sitting down upon a green bank by the side of their hut, had given him an outline of his early life in England—of his first coming to sea—of his wanderings and adventures on the great ocean, and of his final shipwreck on the island. He describes, as well as he can, the form and appearance of the great ship in which he had sailed, its spacious decks and numerous company, and makes him acquainted with his hope that, ere long, a similar ship, from that same native land, will appear in the horizon and come, attracted by their signals, to the island, and bear him away to his home.

Now such a conversation as this is intended to *give information*. It may indeed be a useful discipline to Friday's

Teaching him to count.

powers to listen to it, but that is not its main design. Robinson's chief design is, to make his savage companion acquainted with *certain facts*, which it is on many accounts important that he should know.

Now let us take a third case. My readers are all doubtless aware that savages can usually count only as far as they have fingers to illustrate their arithmetic. Some tribes can use both hands, counting as far as ten, and when they get beyond that they hold up both hands, shake their heads as if in perplexity, and say "*great many—great many.*" Other tribes can go no farther than one hand, and have no means for numbering beyond five.

Now suppose Robinson were to undertake to teach Friday to count. He might say to himself that it would often be a great convenience to him if Friday were able to count, so that he might ascertain and express numbers higher than those which he could represent by his fingers. He accordingly commences the task, and perseveres day after day in the lesson. I say day after day, for, easy as it may seem to us, it is a matter of no small difficulty to teach a savage to count. Now, although there is unquestionably an important mental discipline secured by such an effort on the part of the savage, and although the learning to count is in one sense an acquisition of knowledge—it is, in a much more important sense, the acquisition of *skill*. By making the process of counting familiar, Friday is not so properly acquiring a *knowledge of facts*, as learning *something to do*. It is of the nature of skill which he is to use in future times for the benefit of himself and of Robinson.

If you call to mind the various studies which are urged upon the attention of the young, you will find that *skill*, that is, ability to *do something*, is very often the object in view. It is so with arithmetic. In studying the fundamental rules, the main design is not to bring in information to your minds,

but to teach you to do something. When you read history, you are acquiring *knowledge*—when you study rhetoric or write composition for practice, you are acquiring *skill*. Now all these three objects in a good scheme of education are to be kept constantly in view, and to be regularly provided for. A young man at college, for instance, will study his demonstration in mathematics in the morning, for the purpose of *improving and strengthening his powers*; he will listen to a philosophical or chemical lecture, or study botany in the fields in the afternoon, to *obtain knowledge*; and in the evening he will practice in his debating society, to *acquire skill*. These three things are distinct and independent, but all equally important in the business of life. If one is cultivated and the others neglected, the man is very poorly qualified for usefulness; and yet nothing is more common than such half-educated men.

I have often known persons in whom the first of these objects alone was secured. You will recognize one who is in danger of such a result in his education, by his strong interest—if he is in college for example—in those pursuits of his class which require great mental effort; and by his neglect of the equally important parts of his course, which would store his mind with facts. He attracts the admiration of his class by his fluent familiarity with all the mazes of the most intricate theorem or problem; and he excites an equal surprise by his apparent dullness at the recitation in history, making, as he does, the most ludicrous blunders, and showing the most lamentable ignorance of every thing which is beyond the pale of demonstration. When at last he comes out into the world, his mind is acute and powerful, but he is an entire stranger to the scene in which he is to move; he can do no good, because he does not know where his efforts are to be applied; he makes the same blunders in real life that he did in college in its history, and is soon neglected

Neglect of important duties.

and forgotten. He had cultivated *simple power*, but was without *information* or *skill*; his power was consequently almost useless.

On the other hand, a young man may spend his whole strength in simply *obtaining knowledge*—neglecting the cultivation of mental power, or the acquisition of skill. He neglects his severer studies, and his various opportunities for practice. “*Spherics!*” says he, “and trigonometrical formulas! what good will they ever do me? I am not going to be an almanac-maker, or to gain my livelihood by calculating eclipses.” So he reads history, and voyages, and travels, and devours every species of periodical literature which finds its way within college walls. He very probably neglects those duties which, if faithfully performed, would cultivate the powers of conversation, and writing, and public speaking; and he comes into the world equally celebrated among all who know him, on the one hand for the variety and extent of his general knowledge, and on the other, for the slenderness of his original mental power, and his utter want of any skill in bringing his multifarious acquisitions to bear upon the objects of life.

In the same manner I might illustrate the excessive pursuit of the last of the objects I have named, namely, *the acquisition of skill*, but it is unnecessary. My readers will, I think, all clearly see that these objects are distinct, and that all are of great importance to every one. To be most extensively useful, you must have original mental power, and knowledge of facts, and skill to apply that knowledge in the most effectual manner.

The illustrations which I have employed, have referred more directly to the cases of young men in a course of public education, but I have not intended that these principles should be exclusively applied to them. Nor are they to be confined in their application to the preparatory stages of edu-

Intellectual progress of a mother.

cation. Take for example a young mother of a family. She ought at all times to be making daily intellectual progress, and this intellectual progress ought to be such as to secure a proportional attention to all the three objects which I have named. She ought to investigate something which shall task her powers to the utmost, so as to secure the *discipline and improvement of those powers*. She ought also to make regular and systematic efforts to *acquire information*—by reading and by conversation, enlarging as much as possible the field of her vision, so that she can the more fully understand the circumstances in which she is placed, and the means of influence and usefulness within her reach. She ought also to adopt systematic plans for increasing *her skill*—by learning, for example, system in all her affairs—by studying improvements in the manner in which all her duties are performed—endeavoring to become more faithful, and systematic, and regular in all her employments. By this means, she may acquire dexterity in every pursuit, an important influence over other minds, and especially a higher skill in interesting, and instructing, and governing her children.

But I must not go more into detail in this part of my subject. The best means of intellectual improvement demand a volume instead of a chapter, though a chapter is all which can be properly appropriated to the subject in a work like this. What I have already said in regard to the three separate and distinct objects in view in education, has been chiefly designed to persuade my young readers to engage cheerfully and cordially in all the pursuits which those who are older and wiser than they have prescribed in the various literary institutions with which they are connected. I shall, with these remarks, leave the subject of the pursuit of study in literary seminaries, and close the chapter with a few directions in regard to such means of improvement as may be privately resorted to by individuals, in their efforts to improve.

Reading.

System.

1. READING. There are several detached directions which will be of great service to you in your private reading, if they are faithfully followed.

Read systematically. I mean by this, do not take up and read any books because they merely chance to fall in your way. You see on your neighbor's table a book which, as you turn over the leaves in a very careless manner, appears to be interesting, as you say, and you think you would like to read it. You borrow it, carry it home, and at some convenient time you begin. Soon, however, either from taking it up at a time when you were interested in something else, or from being frequently interrupted, or perhaps from the character of the book, you find it dull, and after wasting a few hours upon the first fifty pages, you turn over the remainder of the leaves, and then send the book home. After a few days more, you find some other book by a similar accident, and pursue the same course. Such a method of attempting to acquire knowledge from books, will only dissipate the mind, destroy all habits of accurate thinking, and unfit you for any intellectual progress.

But you must not go into the opposite extreme of drawing up for yourself a set of rules and a system of reading full enough to occupy you for years, and then begin upon that with the determination of confining yourself, at all hazards, rigidly to it. What I mean by systematic reading is this.

Reflect upon your circumstances and condition in life, and consider what sort of knowledge will most increase your usefulness and happiness. Then inquire of some judicious friend for proper books. If accident throws some book in your way, consider whether the subject upon which it treats is one which comes within your plan. Inquire about it, if you can not form an opinion yourself, and if you conclude to read it, persevere and finish it

Variety.

Thorough reading.

Systematic reading requires, too, that you should secure *variety* in your books. Look over the departments of human knowledge, and see that your plan is so formed that it will give you some knowledge of them all. In regard to the precise time and manner in which you shall fill up the details, it is undoubtedly best not to form any exact plan. It is better to leave such to be decided by circumstances, and even by your inclinations, from time to time. You will enter with more spirit and success into the prosecution of any inquiry, if you engage in it at a time when it seems alluring and interesting to you.

Reading thoroughly. Avoid getting into the habit of going over the page in a listless and mechanical manner. Make an effort to penetrate to the full meaning of your author, and think patiently of every difficult passage until you understand it; or if it baffles your unassisted efforts have it explained. Thorough reading requires also that you should make yourself acquainted with all those *attendant circumstances* which enable you the more fully to understand the author's meaning. Examine carefully the title-page and preface of every book that you read, in order that you may learn who wrote it, where it was written, and what it was written for. Have at hand, if possible, such helps as maps, and a gazetteer, and a biographical dictionary. Be careful, then, to find upon the map *every place* mentioned, and learn from the gazetteer what sort of a place it is. If an allusion is made to any circumstance in the life of an eminent man, or in public history, investigate the allusion by books or by inquiry, so as fully to understand it. If possible, find other accounts of the transactions which your author is describing, and compare one with another; reflect upon the differences in the statements, and endeavor to ascertain the truth. Such a mode of reading as this is a very slow way of getting over the pages of a book, but it is a very rapid way of acquiring knowledge.

Do not rashly undertake to read very extensive works. A young person will sometimes commence Hume's England, or Gibbon's Decline and Fall, or Hallam's Middle Ages, or some other extensive work, beginning it with no calculation of the time which will be required to complete it, and in fact with no definite plan whatever. Such an undertaking is almost always a failure. Any mind under twenty years of age will get wearied out again and again in going through a dozen octavo volumes on any subject whatever. There is no objection to reading such works, but let it be *in detached portions at a time*. Select, for instance, from Hume's most interesting narrative, the reign of some one monarch, Elizabeth or Alfred; or make choice of such a subject as the crusades, or the life of Mary Queen of Scots, and mark off such a portion of the whole work as shall relate to the topic thus chosen. This you can readily do, and with no greater difficulty on account of being compelled to begin in the middle of the history, than must always be felt in reading works of that nature. If you begin at the beginning of a work, and go regularly through to the end, you will find a thousand cases in which the narrative which you read is connected with other histories in such a way as to demand the same effort to understand the connection, that will be necessary in the course that I have proposed.

Form then, for your reading, *short* and *definite* plans. When you commence a work, calculate how long it will take you to finish it, and endeavor to adhere to the plan you shall form in regard to the degree of rapidity with which you will proceed. This habit, if once formed, will be the means of promoting regularity and efficacy in all your plans.

II. CONVERSATION. This topic deserves a volume, instead of the very brief notice which is all that is consistent with the plan of this book. It is known and admitted to be one of the most important of all attainments, and perhaps nothing

Difficulty of cultivating it.

is more desired by all intelligent young persons who reflect at all upon their means of influence and improvement, than conversational power. But, notwithstanding this general impression in its favor, there is nothing of half its importance, which is so entirely neglected in education. And there is, it must be acknowledged, a very great difficulty in the subject. It can not be taught in schools and by classes, like the other branches of knowledge or skill. Some few successful experiments have indeed been made, but almost every effort to make it a distinct object of attention in a literary seminary, has either failed entirely, or resulted in producing a stiff and formal manner, which is very far from being pleasing. The acquisition of skill in conversation therefore must, in most cases, be left to individual effort; and even here, if the acquisition of skill is made the *direct object*, the individual will notice his manner so much, and take so much pains with that, as to be in peculiar danger of affectation or formality. To acquire the art of conversation then, I would recommend that you should practice conversation systematically and constantly, but that you should have some other objects than improvement in your manner of expressing yourself, mainly in view. You will become interested in these objects, and consequently interested in the conversation which you make use of as a means of promoting them; and by not having your own manner directly in view, the danger of that stiffness, precision, or affectation, which is so common a result of efforts to improve in such an art as this, will be escaped. I will mention what these objects may be.

Make conversation a means of acquiring knowledge. Every person with whom you are thrown into casual connection, has undoubtedly some knowledge which would be useful or valuable to you. You are riding in the stage-coach, I will suppose, and the rough-looking man who sits before you appears so unattractive that you do not imagine that he

Means of cultivating it.

Experiments proposed.

has any thing to say which can interest you. But speak to him—draw him into conversation, and you will find that he is a sea-captain who has visited a hundred ports, and can tell you many interesting stories about every clime. He will like to talk, if he finds that you are interested in hearing him; and you may make, by his assistance, a more important progress in really useful knowledge, during that day's ride, than by the study of the best lesson from a book that was ever learned. Avail yourselves, in this way, of every opportunity which Providence may place within your reach.

You may do much to anticipate and to prepare for conversation. You expect, I will suppose, to be thrown into the company of a gentleman residing in a distant city. Now, before you meet him, go to such sources of information as are within your reach, and learn all that you can about that city. You will certainly be able to obtain some hints in regard to its public institutions, its situation, its business, and its objects of interest of every kind. Now you can not read the brief notices of this sort which common books can furnish, without having your curiosity excited in regard to some points at least, and you will go into the company of the stranger, not dreading his presence and shrinking from the necessity of conversation, but eager to avail yourself of the



THE SEA-CAPTAIN

Plans and experiments.

opportunity of gratifying your curiosity, and learning something full and satisfactory from an eye-witness of the scenes which the book had so briefly described. By this means, too, the knowledge of books and of conversation—of study and of real life—will be brought together; and this is a most important object for you to secure. It will give vividness and an air of reality to written description, if you can frequently, after reading the description, have an opportunity to converse with one who has seen the object or the scene described.

You may make, too, a more general preparation for the opportunities for conversation which you will enjoy. Consider what places and what scenes those with whom you may be casually thrown into connection, will most frequently have visited, and make yourself as much acquainted with them as possible; you can then converse about them. Ascertain, too, what are the common topics of conversation in the place in which you reside, and learn by reading or by inquiry all you can about them; so that you can be prepared to understand fully what you hear, and make your own inquiries advantageously, and thus be prepared to engage intelligently and with good effect, in the conversation in which you may have opportunity to join.

On the same principle it will be well for you, when you meet with any difficulty in your reading or in your studies, or when in your private meditations any inquiries arise in your minds which you can not yourselves satisfactorily answer, not to dismiss them from your thoughts as difficulties which must remain because you can not yourselves remove them. Consider who of your acquaintances will be most probably able to assist you in regard to each. One may be a philosophical question, another a point of general literature, and a third may be a question of Christian duty. By a moment's reflection you will easily determine to whom

Digested knowledge.

Necessity of digesting what is read.

each ought to be referred ; and when the next opportunity occurs you can refer them, and give yourself and your friend equal pleasure by the conversation which you will thus introduce.

Make conversation a means of digesting your knowledge
The food that is received into the system is, by a peculiar set of vessels, dissolved, and so incorporated with the very system itself as to become actually a part of it ; it is assimilated completely, and then, and only then, does it promote its growth and strength. Now, it is just so with the reception of knowledge. It must not only be *received* by the mind, but it must be *analyzed* and *incorporated with it*, so as to form a part of the very mind itself ; and then, and not till then, can the knowledge be properly said to be *really possessed*. If a scholar reads a passage in an author, simply receiving it into the mind as a mass, it will do him very little good. Take for example these very remarks on conversation : a reader may peruse the pages thoroughly, and fully understand all that I say, and yet the whole that I present may lie in the mind an undigested mass, which never can nourish or sustain the intellect. On the other hand, it may be not merely received into the mind, but made a subject of thought and reflection there ; it may be analyzed ; the principles which it explains may be applied to the circumstances of the reader ; the hints may be carried out, and resolutions formed for acting in accordance with the views presented. By these and similar means the reader becomes possessed, really and fully, of new ideas on the subject of conversation. His thoughts and notions in regard to it are permanently changed. His knowledge, in a word, is digested—assimilated to his own mind, so as to become as it were a part of it, and so intimately united with it as not to be separated again.

Now, conversation affords one of the most important means

of *digesting* what is read and heard. In fact, you can not talk about what you learn, without *digesting* it. Sometimes two persons read together, aloud, by turns,—each one freely remarking upon what is heard, making inquiries, or bringing forward additional facts or illustrations connected with the subject. Sometimes two persons reading separately, come afterward together for a walk, and each one describes his own book, and relates the substance of what it contains as far as he has read it, bringing down at each successive meeting the narrative or the description as far as the reader has gone. By this means each acquires the power of language and expression, digests and fixes what he has read, and also gives information to his companion. If any two of my readers will try this experiment, they will find much pleasure and improvement from it.

III. WRITING. The third and perhaps the most important of the means of intellectual improvement is the use of the pen. The powers of the pen, as an instrument for accomplishing all the objects of intellectual effort, discipline, knowledge, and skill, are almost altogether unknown among the young. I am satisfied, however, that any general remarks which I might make would be less likely to interest my readers in this subject, than a particular description of the manner in which they can best use the pen to accomplish the objects in view. I shall accordingly come at once to minute detail.

1. *Personal Journals.* Every young person old enough to write, may take a great deal of pleasure in keeping a journal of his own personal history. After a very little practice the work itself will be pleasant, and the improvement which it will promote is far greater than one who has not actually experienced it would expect. The style should be a simple narrative of facts,—chiefly descriptions of scenes through which you have passed, and memoranda in regard to impor-

Form and manner.

Running titles

tant points of your history. Every thing relating to your progress in knowledge, your plans for your own improvement, the books that you read, and the degree of interest which they excited, should be noted down. You ought not to resolve to write *every day*, because sometimes it will be impossible to do so; and then when your resolution has once yielded to necessity, it will afterward more easily be broken by negligence. Resolve simply to write *when you can*; only be careful to watch yourself, and see that you persevere in your plan, whatever interruptions may for a time suspend it. At the close of the week, think how you have been employed during the week, and make a record—a short one at least you certainly can—of what has interested you. When, from forgetfulness, or loss of interest in it, or pressure of other duties, you have for a long time neglected your journal, do not throw it aside and take up a new book and begin formally once more—but begin in the same book, at the place where you left off before—filling up, with a few brief paragraphs, the interval of the history; and thus persevere.

There should be in a journal, and in all the other sets of books which I shall describe, a *double running title*, like that over the pages of this book, with two lines ruled as above, so that the general title may be above the upper one, and the particular subjects of each individual page above the under one. This double running title would be in the following form :

1850.

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

61.

Ride into the country.

My sister's sickness.

The reader will understand that the number 61 represents the page. Corresponding with 1850 on the left hand page, should be written the name of the place in which the writer resides and the word *private* may be used instead of *per-*

sonal, if it is preferred. The book should be of such a form as can be easily written in, and of moderate or small size. You can begin a second volume when you have finished the first, and the volumes will in a few years begin to be numerous. I have seen very many manuscript volumes made in this way.

Whatever may be the size or form of your journal, it may be made attractive by being embellished with illustrations. These illustrations may consist of drawings made by yourself or your friends, or of engravings given to you for keepsakes, or coming into your possession when traveling, as representations of the places that you visit. Many such will come into your possession if you have a journal to put them into, and if you value them for that purpose. Once, when I had been spending several days at a hotel with some friends, a child of twelve years of age who was of the party, asked me one day at dinner if she should take one of the "bills of fare" from the table. "Certainly," I said, "but what do you want it for?" "I want to cut off the picture of the hotel from the top of it," she replied, "to put it into my journal." I saw the engraving afterward in its place in the journal, where I have no doubt it remained many years, and often served to remind the ingenious preserver of it of her pleasant sojourn at the hotel.

In some cases a delicate flower, carefully pressed, will serve as a very beautiful and very lasting memorial of the place where it grew, and of the circumstances under which it was gathered.*

A journal, now, kept in this systematic manner, will be

* Engravings can be most conveniently fastened in by wafers, which have been first *split* with a penknife to make them thin, and then quartered. Of course white wafers are the most suitable. Flowers can best be secured by means of a few touches of a very *thick* solution of gum arabic, upon the underside of every leaf and stem.

| Family journal. | By brothers and sisters. | Its advantages. |
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interesting and valuable, if you describe in it the things *that most interested you* at the age in which you kept it ; and if it is carried on regularly through life, even with such interruptions as I have alluded to, it will be a most valuable and most interesting document. You will read its pages again and again with profit and pleasure.

2. *Family Journal.* Let three or four of the older brothers and sisters of a family agree to write a history of the family. Any father would procure a book for this purpose, and if the writers are young, the articles intended for insertion in it might be written first, on separate paper, and then corrected and transcribed. The subjects suitable to be recorded in such a book will suggest themselves to every one ; a description of the place of residence at the time of commencing the book, with similar descriptions of other places from time to time, in case of removals—the journeys or absences of the head of the family or its members—the sad scenes of sickness or death which may be witnessed, and the joyous ones of weddings, or festivities, or holydays—the manner in which the members are from time to time employed—and pictures of the scenes which the fireside group exhibits in the long winter evenings—or the conversation which is heard and the plans formed at the supper table, or in the morning walk,—these and a thousand similar topics would furnish ample material for the work.

If a family, when first established, should commence such a record of their own efforts and plans, and the various dealings of Providence toward them, the father and the mother carrying it on jointly until the children are old enough to take the pen, they would find the work a source of great improvement and pleasure. It would tend to keep distinctly in view the great object for which they ought to live, and repeatedly recognizing, as they doubtless would do, the hand

of God, they would feel more sensibly and more constantly their dependence upon him.

The form and manner in which such a journal should be written might properly be the same with that described under the last head—the word *family* being substituted for *personal* in the general title. It ought also to be written in such a style and upon such subjects as shall render it proper for the perusal of children. On this account, it will be well to avoid such particulars, in regard to any child, as may be flattering to his vanity when he shall become old enough to read them, and to refrain from making a record of faults which would remain a standing source of suffering and disgrace, when perhaps they ought soon to be forgotten. It is true, that one of the most important portions of such a journal would consist of the description of the various plans adopted for correcting faults, and for promoting improvement—the peculiar moral and intellectual treatment which each child received—the success of the various experiments in education which intelligent parents will always be disposed to try—and anecdotes of the children, illustrating the language, or the sentiments, or the difficulties of childhood. With a little dexterity, however, on the part of the writer, a faithful record of all these things can be kept, and yet, by an omission of names, or of some important circumstances, the evils I have above alluded to may be avoided.

3. *Notes and Abstracts.* It is sometimes the case, that young persons, when they meet with any thing remarkable in the course of their reading, *transcribe it*, with the expectation of referring to their copy afterward to refresh their memories; and thus, after time, they get their desks perhaps very full of knowledge, while very little remains in the head. Now it ought to be remembered that knowledge is of no value, or at least of very little, unless it is fairly lodged *in the mind*, and so digested as to become a permanent posses-

True design of taking notes.

sion. If the transcribing or writing of notes and abstracts of what you read is made the *means* of fixing thus firmly in the mind your various acquisitions, it is of immense value ; if made the *substitute* for it, it is worse than useless. It may be a most powerful means, as any one may prove to himself by the following experiment.

Read some history in the ordinary way, without the use of the pen, except in respect to some one chapter in the middle of the work, with which you may try the experiment of an abstract. After having read this chapter attentively, shut the book and write off the substance of the narrative which it contains, in your own language. The more you deviate in style and language from your author the better, because, by such a deviation you employ your own original resources, you reduce the knowledge which you have gained to a form adapted to your own habits of thought, and you consequently make it more fully your own, and fix it more indelibly in the mind. After finishing the abstract of that chapter, go on with the remainder of the book in the usual way, by simply reading it attentively. You will find now, if you carefully try this experiment, that the chapter which you have thus treated will, for many years, stand out most conspicuous among all the rest in your recollections of the work. The facts which it has stated, will retain possession of your mind when all the rest are forgotten, and they will come up, when wanted for use, with a readiness which will show how entirely you made them your own.

It is on this principle, and with such a view, that notes and abstracts are to be written. Some very brief practical directions will be of service to those who wish to adopt the plan.

Do not resolve to write copious abstracts of *all* that you read ; the labor would be too great. Never read, however, without your abstract-book at hand, and record whatever strikes you as desirable to be remembered. Sometimes, when

| Form of books. | Plan. | Variety. |
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reading a book of great importance, and full of information which is new and valuable, you may write a full abstract of the whole. Gibbon, the celebrated historian, attributed, it is said, much of the success of his writing to the influence of a very copious abstract which he had made of Blackstone's Commentaries, a most interesting book, and one which no young man of education can read without profit and pleasure.

Let the form of your abstract-books be like the journals already described ; with ruled lines at the top for a double running title, to facilitate reference.

Let your abstracts be of every variety of form and manner, —sometimes long and sometimes short, sometime fully written in a finished style, and sometimes forming merely a table of contents of your book. There may be a blank line left between the separate articles, and the title of each article should be written before it, and doubly underscored, that is, distinguished by a double line drawn under it. When this caption is the title of a book read, and is prefixed to a long abstract, it may properly be placed *over* the article. Sometimes the writer, in making his notes, will merely copy a remarkable expression, or a single interesting fact ; and at other times a valuable moral sentiment, or a happy illustration. He will often insert only a single paragraph from a long book, and at other times make a full abstract of its contents. In a word, the manner in which such note-books will be filled, will vary according to the taste or ingenuity of the individual student ; and also according to the nature of the studies in which he is engaged. Whatever may be the form which is adopted, the substantial advantages to be secured will be always the same.

The reader will observe that a great prominence has been given in this chapter to the *use of the pen*, as a means of intellectual and moral improvement. I assure my readers that

Power of the pen.

the power of the pen for such a purpose is not overrated. I am aware that a great many persons, though they may approve what I have said, will not make any vigorous and earnest efforts to adopt the plan. Still more will probably begin a book or two, but will soon forget their resolution, and leave the half-finished manuscript in some neglected corner of their desks finally abandoned. But if any should adopt these plans, and faithfully prosecute them, they will find that the practice of expressing in their own language, with the pen, such facts as they may learn, and such observations or reflections as they may make, will exert a most powerful influence upon all the habits of the mind, and upon the whole intellectual character.

Conclusion.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

“ And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.”

As I draw toward the close of this volume, I think of the influence which it is to exert upon the many who will read it, with mingled emotions of hope and fear. I have endeavored to state, and to illustrate as distinctly as I could,



CONCLUSION.

Responsibility of religious teachers.

the principles of Christian duty ; and if, my reader, you have perused these pages with attention and care, they must have been the means of bringing very plainly before your mind the question, whether you will or will not confess and forsake your sins, and henceforth live to God, that you may accomplish the great object for which life was given. I shall say nothing, in these few concluding paragraphs, to those who have read the book thus far without coming in heart to the Savior. If they have not been persuaded ere this to do it, they would not be persuaded by any thing which I have time and space now to say. I have, however, before ending this volume, a few parting words for those who have accompanied me thus far with at least some attempt at self-application—some desire to cherish the feelings which I have endeavored to portray—some penitence for sin, and resolutions to perform the duties which I have from time to time pressed upon them.

It is, if the Bible is true, a serious thing to have opportunity to read a religious book—and more especially for the young to have opportunity to read a practical treatise on the duties of piety, written expressly for their use. The time is coming when we shall look back upon all our privileges with sad reflections at the recollection of those which we have not improved ; and it is sad for me to think that many of those who shall have read these pages will in a future, and perhaps not a very distant day, look upon me as the innocent means of aggravating their sufferings, by having assisted to bring them light, which they nevertheless would not regard. This unpleasant part of my responsibility I must necessarily assume. I share it with every one who endeavors to lay before men the principles of duty, and the inducements to the performance of it. He who enlightens the path of piety, promotes the happiness of those who are persuaded to walk in it, but he is the innocent means of adding to the guilt and

Injury to be done by this book.

Imperfect self-application.

misery of such as will still turn away. To the one class of persons, says Paul, "we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other, the savor of life unto life."

It is not merely to those who absolutely neglect or refuse to do their duty to God, that the ill consequences of having neglected their privileges and means of improvement will accrue. These consequences will be just as sure to those who partially neglect them. I will suppose that a young person, whose heart is in some degree renewed, and who has begun to live to God, receives and reads this book. She feels desirous of cultivating Christian principles, and she sits down to the work with a sincere desire to derive spiritual benefit from the instructions which it contains. She does not run over the pages, dissecting out the stories for the sake of the interest of the narrative, and neglecting all the applications of them for the purposes of instruction; but she inquires when a fact or an illustration is introduced, for what purpose it is used—what moral lesson it is intended to teach—and how she can learn from it something to guide her in the discharge of duty. She goes on in this manner through the book, and generally understands its truths, and the principles which it inculcates. But she does not cordially and *in full earnest* engage in the practice of them. For example, she reads the chapter on confession, and understands what I mean by full confession of all sins to God, and forms the vague and indefinite resolution to confess her sins more minutely than she has done; but she does not, in the spirit of that chapter, explore fully all her heart, and scrutinize with an impartial eye all her conduct, that every thing which is wrong may be brought to light, and frankly confessed and abandoned. She does not, in a word, make a serious and an *earnest business* of confessing and forsaking all sin.

In another case, a young man who is perhaps sincerely a Christian, though the influence of Christian principle is yet

A useless way of reading.

weak in his heart, reads that portion of the work which relates to the Sabbath. He knows that his Sabbaths have not been spent in so pleasant or profitable a manner as they might be, and he sees that the principles pointed out there would guide him to duty and to happiness on that day, if he would faithfully and perseveringly apply them to his own ease. He accordingly makes a feeble resolution to do it. The first Sabbath after he reads the chapter, his resolutions are partially kept. But he gradually neglects them, and returns to his former state of inaction and spiritual torpor on God's holy day.

Now there is no question that many young Christians will read this book in the manner I have above described ; that is, they throw themselves as it were *passively* before it, allowing it to exert all the influence it will, by its own power, but doing very little in the way of vigorous effort to *obtain good* from it. They seem to satisfy themselves by giving the book an opportunity to *do them good*, but do little to *draw from it*, by their *own efforts*, the advantages which it might afford. Now a book of religious instruction is not like a *medicine*, which, if it is once admitted into the system, will produce its effect without any further effort on the part of the patient. It is rather a tool or an instrument which you are to use industriously yourself. The moral powers will not grow unless you cultivate them by your own active efforts. If you satisfy yourself with merely bringing moral and religious truth into contact with your mind, expecting it, by its own power, to produce the hoped-for fruits, you will be like a farmer who should, in the spring, just put a plow or two in one part of his field, and half a dozen spades and hoes in another, and expect by this means to secure a harvest. Many persons read religious books continually, but make no progress in piety. The reason is, their own moral powers are inert while they do it. The *intellect* may be active in reading

Effectual reading.

Plan recommended.

and understanding the successive pages, but the *heart* and the *conscience* lie still, hoping that the truth *may* of itself do them good. They bring the instrument to the field and lay it down, and then stand by its side wondering why it does not do its work.

I beg my readers not to treat this volume in that way, and not to suppose that simply to read and understand it, however thoroughly it may be done, will do them any good. The book, of itself, never *can do good*. It is intended to show its readers how *they* may do good to themselves, and it will produce no good effect upon any who are not willing to be *active* in its application and use.

Do you, my reader, really wish to derive permanent and real benefit from this book? If so, take the following measures; it is a course which it would be well for you always to take at the close of every book that you read on the subject of duty. Recall to mind all those passages which, as you have read its pages, have presented to you something which at the time you resolved to do. Recollect, if you can, every plan recommended, which, at the time when you were reading it, seemed to be suited to your own case, and which you then thought you should adopt. If you have forgotten them, you can easily call them to mind by a little effort, or by a cursory review. You will thus bring up again to your mind those points in which the instructions of the book are particularly adapted to your own past history and present spiritual condition.

After having thus fully reconsidered the whole ground, and gathered all the important points which are peculiarly adapted to your own case into one view, consider deliberately, before you finally close the book, *what you will do* with regard to them. If any thing has been made plain to be your duty, consider and decide distinctly whether you will do it or not. If any thing has been shown to be conducive to

Be in earnest.

your happiness, determine, deliberately and understandingly, whether you will adopt it or not. Do not leave it to be decided by chance, or by your own accidental feelings of energy or of indolence, what course you will take in reference to a subject so momentous as the question of religious duty. I fear, however, that notwithstanding all that I can say, very many, even among the most thoughtful of my readers, will close this book without deriving from it any permanent good, either in their conduct or their hearts. It will have only produced a few good intentions, which will never be carried into effect, or arouse them to momentary effort, which will soon yield again to indolence and languor.

There is no impression that I more strongly desire to produce in these few remaining pages, than that you should be in *earnest*, in deep and persevering earnest, in your efforts after holiness and salvation. If you are interested enough in religion to give up the pleasures of sin, you lose all enjoyment unless you grasp the happiness of piety. There are, at the present day, great numbers in whose hearts religious principle has taken so strong a hold as to awaken conscience and to destroy their peace, if they continue to sin ; but they do not give themselves up with all their hearts to the service of the Savior. They feel, consequently, that they have lost the world ;—they can not be satisfied with its pleasures, and they are unhappy, and feel that they are out of place when in the company of its votaries. But though they have thrown themselves out of one home, they do not, in earnest, provide themselves with another. They do not give all the heart to God. No life is more delightful than one spent in intimate communion with our Father above, and in earnest and devoted efforts to please him by promoting human happiness ; and none is perhaps more unhappy, and prepares more effectually for a melancholy dying hour, than to spend our days with the path of duty plain before us, and conscience

A great proportion of life gone.

urging us to walk in it, while we hang back, and walk with a slow and hesitating step, and look away wistfully at the fruits which we dare not taste. Do not take such a course as this. When you abandon the world, abandon it entirely; and when you choose God and religion for your portion, do it with all your heart. outrun conscience in the path of duty, instead of waiting to have your lagging steps quickened by her scourge.

Once more. Much less of life is left to you than you generally suppose. Perhaps the general age of the readers of this book will be between fifteen and twenty, and fifteen or twenty years is probably, upon an average, half of life. I call you young, because you are young in reference to the active business of this world. You have just reached the full development of your powers, and have consequently but just begun the actual work of life. The long years that are past have been spent in preparation. Hence you are called young—you are said to be just beginning life, understanding, by life, the pursuits and the business of maturity. But life, if you understand by it the season of preparation for eternity, is more than half gone;—life, so far as it presents opportunities and facilities for penitence and pardon—so far as it bears on the formation of character, and is to be considered as a period of probation—is unquestionably more than half gone to those who are between fifteen and twenty. In a vast number of cases, it is more than half gone, even *in duration*, at that time; and if we consider the thousand influences which crowd around the years of childhood and youth, winning to piety, and making a surrender to Jehovah easy and pleasant then, and on the other hand look forward beyond the years of maturity, and see these influences losing all their power, and the heart becoming harder and harder under the deadening effects of continuance in sin, we shall not doubt a moment that the years of immaturity make a far

Closing address to parents.

more important part of our time of probation than all those that follow.

You do right, then, when you are thinking of your business or your profession, to consider life as but begun; but when you look upon the great work of preparation for another world, you might more properly consider it as nearly ended. Almost all moral changes of character are usually effected before the period at which you have arrived, and soon all that will probably remain to you on earth will be to exemplify, for a few years, the character which in early life you formed. If, therefore, you would do any thing in your own heart for the cause of truth and duty, you must do it in earnest, and must do it now.

I have intended this book chiefly for the young, but I can not close it without a word at parting to those of my readers who have passed the period of youth. If the work shall at all answer the purpose for which it is intended, it will, in some instances at least, be read by the mature; and I may perhaps, without impropriety, address a few words respectfully to them.

You are probably parents; your children have been reading this book, and you have perhaps taken it up because you are interested in whatever interests them. You feel also a very strong desire to promote their piety, and this desire leads you to wish to hear, yourselves, whatever on this subject is addressed to them. I have several times in the course of this work intimated, that the principles which it is designed to illustrate and explain, are equally applicable to the young and the old. It has been adapted, in its style and manner only, to the former class; and I have hoped, as I have penned its pages, that a father might sometimes himself be affected by truths which he was reading during a winter evening to his assembled family; or that a mother might take up the

Their co-operation.

Ways in which they may co-operate.

book purchased for her children, and be led herself to the Savior by a chapter which was mainly written for the purpose of winning them. I do not intend, however, to press here again your own personal duties. I have another object in view.

That object is to ask you to co-operate fully and cordially in this, and in all similar efforts to promote the welfare of your children. If you have accompanied them through this volume, you will know what parts of it are peculiarly adapted to their condition and wants. These parts you can do much to impress upon their minds by your explanations, and by encouraging them to make the efforts which are required. The interest which a father or a mother takes in such a book, is a pretty sure criterion—nay, it is almost the very regulator, of that felt by the child.

If you notice any thing in the volume which you think erroneous, or calculated to lead to error; or if there is any fault which your child discovers and brings to you, with a criticism which you feel to be just, do not deny or attempt to conceal the fault because it occurs in a book whose general object and aim you approve. Separate the minute imperfections from the general object and design of the whole; and while you freely admit a condemnation of the one, show that it does not affect the character of the other, and thus remove every obstacle which would impede what is the great design of the book, to press the power of religious obligation in its most plain and simple form.

On the other hand, do not magnify the faults which you may find, or think you find, or turn off the attention of your children from the serious questions of duty which the book is intended to bring before the conscience and the heart, to a cold and speculative discussion of the style, or the logic, or the phraseology of the author. A religious book is in some degree entitled to the privilege of a religious speaker.

Religious example of parents.

Parents easily can, on their walk home from church, obliterate all serious impressions from the minds of their children, by conversation which shows that they are looking only at the literary aspects of the performance to which they have listened. In the same manner they can destroy the influence of a book, by turning away attention from the questions of duty which it brings up, to an inquiry into the logic of an argument, or a comment upon the dullness or the interest of a story.

There is one thing more which I may perhaps without impropriety say. Your religious influence over your children will depend far more on your example, than upon your efforts to procure for them good religious instruction. They look to you for an exemplification of piety, and if they do not see this, you can not expect that they will yield themselves to its principles on your recommendation. Your children, too, must see piety exemplified in a way which they can appreciate and understand. To make vigorous efforts for the support of the Gospel—to contribute generously for the various benevolent objects of the day—and even to cultivate in your hours of secret devotion the most heartfelt and abasing penitence for sin, will not alone be enough to recommend piety effectually to your children. They look at other aspects of your conduct and character. They observe the tone of kindness or of harshness with which you speak—the tranquillity or the irritation with which you bear the little trials and disappointments of life—your patience in suffering, and your calmness in danger. They watch to observe how faithfully you perform the ordinary duties of your station. They look with eager interest into your countenance, to see with what spirit you receive an injury, or rebuke what is wrong.

By making faithful and constant efforts to live like Christians yourselves, and to exhibit to your children those effects

Blessing obtained by religious example.

of piety upon your conduct and character which they can understand and appreciate, and by adapting religious instruction to the peculiar intellectual habits of the young, you may anticipate a sure and an abundant blessing upon your labors. Chilhood is a most fertile part of the vineyard of the Lord. The seed which is planted there vegetates very soon, and the weeds which spring up are easily eradicated. It is in fact in every respect an easy and a pleasant spot to till, and the flowers and fruits which, with proper effort, will bloom and ripen there, surpass all others in richness and beauty.

THE END.

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